

COMMONWEAL

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THREE GRAVES

Jack London, Emily Dickinson, T.S. Eliot

WILLIAM J. REWAK

THERE AT THE 'NEW YORKER'

Paul Baumann

BILL JORDAN on
Peace scholarships

JORDAN BISHOP
on Canada

Patrick Jordan
on Euthanasia

CRITICS' CHOICES FOR CHRISTMAS

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Critics' choices for Christmas:

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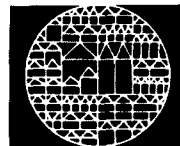
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Commonweal

COMMONWEAL



Too much, already

The war against the Bosnians is like a Greek tragedy with a chorus of print and broadcast journalists directing our attention to scenes of destruction, of pillage, of wanton killing. The protagonists direct this or that attack, lay this or that siege, permit or prohibit this exodus of refugees, while proclaiming the historic necessity of their actions. The audience in Europe and the United States has accepted the decree of the Fates: many people will die; many will become refugees; the war will spread. The Serbs will grab Bosnia, and the Croats will take what is left of Herzegovina. The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina will be left with enclaves and survive at the sufferance of the Serbs and Croats. Other Muslims will become permanent refugees (where have we watched this plot before?). And the audience will await the next cycle of tragedies in Kosovo and Macedonia produced by these same Serbs who have been consigned the role of madmen and fanatics.

The Serbs believe no outside power will stop them. Therefore there is no reason for them not to pursue their goal of a Greater Serbia whether by ethnic cleansing, pillage, rapine, or, when convenient, cease-fires and negotiations. The debate over what is to be done is stymied by the claim that these people—Serbs, Croats, Bosnians—are all driven by unappeasable hatreds. This time, goes the argument, it happens to be the Serbs that have gone overboard. Last time it was the Croats. And, provided they survive, the Bosnians too will ultimately indulge in murderous warfare.

The Fates decree that we are powerless to do anything and so arguments are advanced to ensure that we do not. Diplomatic confusion during the effort in 1990 to make a confederation of Yugoslavia only made matters worse; whatever the West does will make matters worse. Therefore, do nothing. Military intervention of any kind would only lead to a quagmire on the order of Vietnam. Therefore, do nothing. UN forces in Bosnia cannot defend themselves, cannot defend relief supplies, cannot disarm militias or bandits, cannot prevent the abuse of civilian populations. Therefore, do nothing.

But after having done too little too late all along, can we not foresee a far greater tragedy than the one we have been trying to avoid? Think of the refugees. Think of the number of deaths that will occur over the winter from disease, from exposure, from starvation. Think of the Serbs pressing ever more violently and unrelentingly on the unarmed population of Kosovo—more refugees and a direct confrontation with Albania.

Think too of the reputation of the UN: sanctions voted but unenforced; troops attacked but powerless to respond; relief supplies appropriated but undelivered; civilians left to merciless predators under the very eyes of UN forces. And then also remember that this is part of the nascent international effort to build instruments and

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institutions of peace.

There are consequences to doing nothing. A price is paid for doing too little. Omissions, lapses, feigned efforts cost. This is as true in Somalia as in Bosnia. First, the people of these countries, children, women, men, pay with their lives. Second, surrounding countries, besieged by refugees, pay with their own limited resources. Then regions—East Africa and the Balkans and Europe—pay with political acrimony or instability. Finally, the whole international order, especially the UN, pays: it too is implicated in the death and destruction by inaction, by halfway measures, and by a false form of evenhandedness that ends in favoring the most aggressive.

If sanctions are voted as they have been against Serbia, UN member nations, especially neighboring nations, should observe them and enforce them. If UN relief convoys are sent, relief workers should be given the means to defend themselves and the convoys. If UN troops are persistently fired upon and attacked, they should have the means to respond. And when cease-fires are negotiated they should not become covers for rearming or de facto land grabs. This is what has happened in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This is what will happen elsewhere if the international community does not show that it means what it says.

Because the United States remains the sole superpower, it bears a singular responsibility, not necessarily to lead the charge, but in promoting and in practically supporting the idea that a more peaceful world requires active measures—measures that enforce international agreements; that enforce limits on belligerents; that enforce restraints on aggressors; measures that will entail, if all else fails, international military action. It is long past that time in Bosnia. If the renewed effort in November to enforce sanctions and protect convoys does not bring an end to the fighting, strategic points in Serbia—bridges and roads, for example—should become designated targets. Relief efforts in Somalia deserve similar protection.

The Fates do not control our destiny. We do.

ET CETERA

NEATNESS COUNTS *Sisterlife*, published by Feminists for Life of America, credits Samuel A. Nigro, M.D., of Case-Western Reserve University, for this Q. and A.:

“What happens when you give anything to adolescents? What

happens when you give them a car? When you give them alcohol? When you give them cigarettes? I’ve been saying for years, ‘No adolescent should be allowed to obtain contraceptives from a school-based clinic or anywhere else unless they have a note from their mother that their room has been properly cleaned for an entire month.’”

ASK AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN Reportedly, a remark offered by Auxiliary Bishop Austin B. Vaughan during the recent meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops has splintered the ranks of those who are praying for acceptance of women’s ordination. “A woman priest,” said Bishop Vaughan, “is as impossible as for me to have a baby.” The insurgents in the prayer group contend that petitioning the Lord for a moment of metanoia among the hierarchy on this topic is presumptuous since it asks for the impossible. Better to ask for an outbreak of male parthenogenesis among the anointed.

AN EDITOR’S NOTEBOOK

THE GOOD FIGHT ON EUTHANASIA PROPOSALS

Before joining *Commonweal*, I worked for a number of years on the staff of a nursing care facility for terminal cancer patients. Saint Rose’s Home overlooks the East River on Jackson Street in Lower Manhattan. It was founded in the late 1890s by Rose Hawthorne Lathrop, the daughter of Nathaniel Hawthorne, and it continues today thanks to the efforts of the Hawthorne Dominican Sisters and their co-workers.

During my time at Saint Rose’s, death was no stranger. I saw hundreds of people die, victims of every variety of cancer in every conceivable and disastrous manifestation. Not all died the death Catholics traditionally pray for: a graceful or happy death. That is, after all, largely a psychospiritual gift that cannot be leveraged, even by one’s certifiable merits. Yet with very few exceptions, each of these men, women, and children died a good death: relatively comfortable and pain-free, if not always at the expected or desired moment. Even in a hospice setting, death has the final word and arrives sometimes as a thief.

It is death’s habit of arriving stealthily, unpredictably—like the phantom caller in Muriel Spark’s *Memento Mori*—coupled with our fear of pain, loss of bodily integrity, and the unknown, that, in part, lends strength to the present movement for legalized euthanasia in the United States. That’s why such referenda are not going to disappear any time soon.

Just two days after the defeat of California’s euthanasia Proposition 161 on November 3, the *New England Journal of Medicine* published two opinion pieces by respected doctors at prestigious medical schools advocating physician-assisted suicide. And next year alone, there will be legislative efforts to le-

galize euthanasia in a number of states, including New Hampshire, Maine, and Michigan. In each, the stakes are very high. "If one state legalizes these practices [medically assisted suicide], we will see other states adopting similar legislation in a relatively short time," predicts Ron P. Hamel, a senior associate at the Park Ridge Center for the Study of Health, Faith, and Ethics (see the center's newsletter, *The CenterLine*, Fall 1992).

Fortunately, when it comes to euthanasia, American voters seem to be more than simple pragmatists looking for an all-purpose silver bullet. We may have justifiable fears about prolonged, painful, and seemingly purposeless suffering at life's end, but we also have realistic doubts about the final exit enthusiasts. And that's why—at least until now—physician-assisted suicide legislation has failed, even though in poll after poll over the past forty years, a majority of Americans have said they favor such legalization.

In the past two years, major euthanasia propositions—in the generally liberal states of Washington and California—although initially heavily favored to win, both met defeat. In September 1992, a *Los Angeles Times* poll on California Proposition 161, for instance, found that over 60 percent of those queried favored physician-assisted suicide. Yet by October 27, one week before the election, the *Times* reported that those in favor had seen their margin shrink to only 49 to 45 percent. And when the actual votes were finally counted, it was Proposition 161 that was declared dead on arrival, losing soundly, 54 to 46 percent. Why this shift?

I imagine that given time, people began pondering not only the imponderables, but the practical ramifications of Proposition 161. They began to comprehend the utter finality of what 161 was proposing. They, especially the older voters and minorities, started to think about the real potential for abuse. (A post-election poll conducted by the Tarrance Group indicated that voters sixty-five and older opposed the initiative by 64 to 36 percent.) Then, I think, people started considering the revolutionary transformation 161 would mean for the reshaping of medicine, shifting it from a sometime art of healing to a licensed dispatching service. This rethinking was further spurred when cancer survivors started showing up on anti-161 TV ads: people who could have been from one's own family and who testified that life is worth fighting for. Finally, there were the professionals who argued formidably that in almost all cases pain can be controlled; and that laws already on the books provide adequate protection from unwanted, prolonged, or burdensome treatment.

These pragmatic arguments may not be the most basic reasons for opposing euthanasia, but they provide the best grounds on which to fight next year's legislative battles. To most people, they are the strongest and most convincing. And those who have experienced, or worked in, hospice care ought to be given special voice. They know from experience that it is possible to meet the needs of the dying practically, compassionately, and routinely. Hospice personnel know how to handle pain, and, when the time comes, how to accept death. They have seen patients' desire for suicide diminished as pain has been brought under control. And they know at what point treatment is no longer

justified—morally, medically, or legally.

Earlier this year, the American Bar Association's Commission on Legal Problems of the Elderly unanimously opposed Proposition 161. It did so for a number of reasons, but one was most telling. In the present health-care climate, it said, state-authorized euthanasia would not long remain voluntary, and in terms of social equality, the commission argued, access to adequate health care "ought to be a much higher priority than access to death." We can do something about the former; the latter arrives inevitably.

At Saint Rose's, I remember a variety of people as they set off into that final expanse. Like birth, the voyage wasn't always easy, on time, or without blood. But given a chance, it had its own integrity. I'm afraid at this point the euthanists have yet to discover that.

PATRICK JORDAN

THERE AT THE 'NEW YORKER'

FETAL POSITIONS AND THE ODOR OF NARCISSE

The *New Yorker's* first issue (October 5) under new editor Tina Brown (former editor notoriously of *Vanity Fair*) presented its readers with a table of contents of unprecedented detail, a number of graphic innovations, an overpowering aroma of Narcisse, and a new stock of paper that increased the heft of the magazine by 25 percent. Equally heavy in the hand was a gratuitously snide essay on abortion and Catholicism as they combust in American politics.

In a piece wittily titled "Fetus, Don't Fail Me Now," *Time* magazine's formidable art critic Robert Hughes claims to have detected an unmistakable resemblance between something called "Whatizit," an anomalous and misshapen mascot for the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, and a fetus. "The fetish of the religious right had become an Olympic mascot," he surmises. The Whatizit "is a phantom of the *zeitgeist*, a case of overspill, or precipitation, from a popular culture laden with fetal obsession."

"Being an ex-Catholic, I am readily irked by such matters," Hughes explains. Thus begins a brief rehearsal of his gothic religious and sexual education under the Jesuits in Australia. "Every sperm was sacred," he says. Catholic metaphysical claims about the sacredness of sex and its necessary connection to procreation—especially admonitions against masturbation—did not sit well with adolescents "crammed with unruly testosterone." "The notion that some small part of the cosmic order hung on our teen-age willies was a heavy load for us young soldiers in Saint Ignatius's Army of Christ," recalls the pun-prone Private Hughes, who adds that "something of this fetishism about sperm continues to haunt the abortion debate."

Pausing between these spasms of ridicule, he takes a conventionally prochoice position, arguing, somewhat obscurely,

that "the innocence of fetuses is not in doubt. But it is not a moral value. Lettuces are innocent, too." He urges that the Olympic sponsors "abort" the Whatizit: "Anything but this lurid homunculus."

At this late date in the abortion debate it is remarkable that the *New Yorker* should publish such a tired caricature of Catholicism animated by Hughes's truncated understanding of the United States' abortion law. To suggest that the vast majority of Americans who find abortion-on-demand a moral difficulty are acting out of some sexual superstition exemplified by the teachings of the Catholic church is merely the most fashionable kind of prejudice. Conflating exaggerated Catholic condemnations of masturbation with abortion and mocking the idea of fetal life is, to say the least, disingenuous. Lettuces, indeed.

What Hughes rightly criticizes as traditional moral theology's "iron law of abstraction" is equally at work on the pro-choice side of this debate. Some abortion-rights proponents champion the "iron law of abstraction" to the point of suppressing the facts about the beginning of human life. No less than Catholic moralists, they extend a logical scheme unreasonably in the face of human complexity and interdependence.

The cultural forces and intellectual antecedents of the abortion conflict have deep and ambiguous roots. How curious, for example, that Hughes concludes his diatribe by evoking the image of a "lurid homunculus." The homunculus—a small man or dwarf that some of the first men of science believed was inside the sperm—has an interesting history, and one that suggests abortion may have strange fathers indeed. In his recent book, *A World without Women: The Christian Clerical Culture of Western Science* (Knopf), historian David Noble argues that the quest for the homunculus inspired some of the earliest scientific efforts of a celibate, clerical elite.

In the sixteenth century one prominent theory envisioned incubating semen in horse dung, thus producing a "homunculus, a motherless child." As Noble notes, "the idea of the homunculus, based upon spermist theory of conception, continued for some time to hold great attraction for men of science." Noble sug-

gests that the Western rationalistic quest for technical mastery of nature has been driven for 1,000 years not by "men playing God" but "[it can] more appropriately be described as men playing women."

Today technologies of reproduction and genetics have brought us near a culmination of what Noble regards as an essentially misogynist scientific culture. "The very word 'mother' has become a scientific anachronism," he writes. "The obsessive scientific pursuit of a motherless child remains the telltale preoccupation of a womanless world."

So perhaps Hughes has misread this picture. The Whatizit may be an expression of the *zeitgeist*, but not of the particular *zeitgeist* he thinks. What if abortion is not the technological tool that finally liberates women from brute biological servitude, but the final weapon of a triumphant "law of abstraction" driven by the fugitive dream of a "womanless world"? Could the "fetish" and "obsession" of our age be rationalistic dreams of emancipation from the bonds of nature—a dream that Hughes, like most of us, rejects when he hears it from "celibate theologians" but fails to recognize in modern, prochoice dress? Odder still, what if Catholicism's stubborn instinct about the moral dangers of separating sex from procreation proves a truer safeguard of the dignity of women—and of men—than Hughes's faith in the autonomous self?

Stranger things have happened. Remember the homunculus.

PAUL BAUMANN

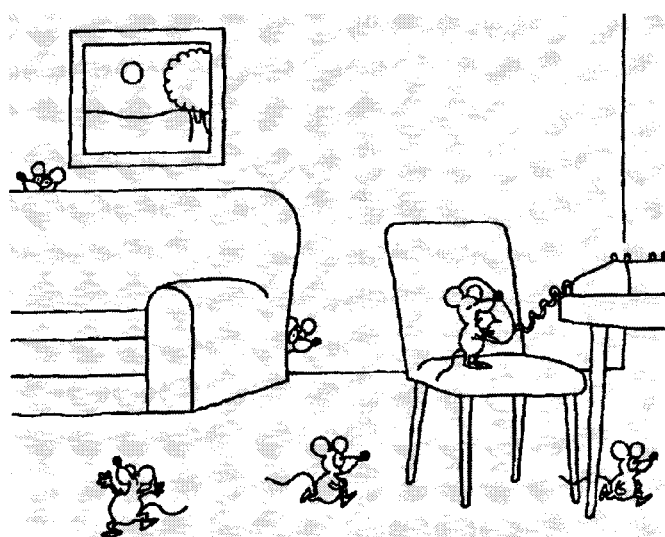
Paul Baumann is the associate editor of Commonweal.

REPORT FROM OTTAWA

I'D SAY THAT'S A 'NO' CANADA HANGS TOGETHER

Two days before Canadians went to the polls on October 26 to vote on the framework for a new constitutional agreement, Canadian newspapers and broadcasters had already begun a postmortem on the referendum. Known as the "Charlottetown Accord," the agreement had been worked out among federal and provincial political leaders at a meeting held last August 28 in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. It had the support of Canada's three major political parties—the Liberals, the Progressive Conservatives, and the New Democrats—associations of business leaders, the Canadian Labor Congress, most of the media in English Canada, and a large array of public figures. Opposing it were the separatist *Parti Québécois*, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), a strong sector of youth from the ruling Quebec Liberal party, the right-wing populist Reform party, a varied assortment of dissidents, trade unions, and Pierre Elliot Trudeau.

Early in the six-week campaign it was pointed out that there was no single NO. Judy Rebick, the fiery leftist leader of NAC,



"I'm sorry...the cat's away right now."

campaign vigorously for the NO side. She and the NAC leadership felt the accord had been worked out without the participation of women and gave them nothing. She saved dissidents from having their NO vote identified with either Preston Manning, leader of the right-wing Reform party, or with Jacques Parizeau of the *Parti Québécois*. Pundits appear to agree now that the NO vote came from six or seven different directions at once, and that it represented an anti-establishment mood in the country. This mood was, paradoxically, reinforced by a widespread popular reaction against a heavy, slick, and well-funded advertising blitz for the YES side. A Saskatchewan cartoonist caught the mood exactly: one pollster says to another, both standing in front of a bungalow as a television set comes crashing out the window: "I'd say that's a NO."

Canadians apparently wanted reasoned argument. They got more of it from the NO campaign. One French language commentator attributed Trudeau's impact to the fact that he made his case for a NO vote with a point-by-point analysis of the agreement. Both the *Parti Québécois* and the Reform party published annotated texts of the accord. Many observers had already noted that the agreement—a political compromise covering the allocation of federal and provincial powers, aboriginal self-government, the recognition of Quebec as a "distinct society," and a brand new Senate with eight members from each province—was far too complex for a simple YES/NO decision.

During the campaign, supporters of both the YES and NO options urged their people to "hold their noses and vote." This implied, for YES supporters, that the seriously-flawed agreement was the best that could be hoped for; for the NO side, it implied that progressives in English Canada would have to join forces with the Reform party, and that conservatives would have to vote with the likes of Judy Rebick and the separatist *Parti Québécois*.

When the vote came, the accord was strongly supported by Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. In Ontario, the YES vote carried by the narrowest of margins: 49.8 to 49.6 percent. It was concentrated in Ottawa and Toronto. Rural, southwestern, and northern Ontario—the latter with a strong aboriginal and francophone population—voted decisively NO. Nova Scotia voted NO in a nearly tied vote. In Quebec, only the island of Montreal, with its strong anglophone and immigrant minorities, and western Quebec, voted YES. The rest of the province was resolutely opposed, as were Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and the Yukon. The final vote nationwide was 53.7 percent NO, 45.3 percent YES.

The campaign revealed a massive disenchantment with the political leadership of the country. Even within aboriginal communities—many of whose leaders had fought hard to get aboriginal self-government formalized in the constitution—the NO vote ran from 60 to 70 percent. This, however, may have reflected less a mistrust of aboriginal leadership than a mistrust of the establishment-sanctioned political process.

Quebec, as always, was unique. While Jacques Parizeau, leader of the *Parti Québécois*, was head of the Quebec NO Committee, there was also a strong group of young dissident Liberals ranged around Jean Allaire, who had led the Quebec Liberal

party's commission on constitutional reform. And while the Allaire Commission's 1991 report, with its demands for exclusive Quebec jurisdiction in twenty-two different areas, had shocked many English Canadians, the fact is that well over half of those powers were already exercised by Quebec. A number of them, in such areas as education, urban affairs, welfare, etc., were already under provincial jurisdiction, as was the use of civil law in Quebec, and worked very well as a practical administrative arrangement. Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa of the Liberal party had accepted the Charlottetown accord and campaigned in favor of it since the alternative would have been a Quebec referendum on sovereignty. While the rejection of political elites was a major factor in English Canada (much of the discussion there concerned the defense of rights), for Quebec the referendum was about the distribution of power. The questions at issue in various parts of the country were not really the same.

To complicate matters further, many Canadians felt that the proposed institutions of the federal government in the new accord appeared cumbersome and unworkable. An elected Senate in which Prince Edward Island (population 120,000) had the

COMMONWEAL BUSINESS MANAGER

In the next five months, we will be adding a business manager to our staff. We are looking for someone to pursue the business interests of the magazine with vigor and intelligence, someone with promotion and business skills committed to working with a small staff and a limited budget to ensure the financial future of *Commonweal*. Previous experience with a magazine, small business, or nonprofit organization is a plus.

The business manager will work with the publisher and staff on a wide variety of business tasks. Initially those tasks will focus on marketing and promotion. Ultimately the job will include responsibility for circulation, promotion, fund-raising, development, and general business matters as well as supervising the business staff.

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Readers are invited to join in our search by passing on this announcement or by letting us know of potential candidates.

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same representation as Quebec (over 6 million) and Ontario (over 8 million), presented problems enough for some. In compensation, Ontario and Quebec were to be given eighteen new, permanent parliamentary seats each. But to these bodies was to be added a new institution, a First Ministers Conference, composed of provincial premiers and the federal prime minister. It would be given specific federal powers. Many felt that all this was too complex for a YES/NO decision. So they voted NO.

So whither goest Canada now? Elijah Harper, an Ojibway-Cree member of the Manitoba legislature who had urged his constituents to abstain, put it this way after the vote: "Life goes on. We were here a long time before it [the accord], and we shall be here a long time after it." In Quebec, a poll taken following the accord's defeat indicated that the majority of the province (54 percent) remained steady in opposing secession. The Mulroney government, for its part, quickly announced that it would tackle the problem of Canada's sagging economy. But Stephen Lewis, former Canadian ambassador to the United Nations, said that if the question of self-government for aboriginal peoples, which Mulroney's Conservative party had stressed as a prime reason for voting YES, were so important, there was no reason why the government should not give it top priority along with the economy. He expressed some amazement that Canada is now governed by politicians who can apparently do only one thing at a time. Others regard the Mulroney government's previous attention to the economy as dubious at best. Perhaps Elijah Harper did have the last word. Life goes on.

JORDAN BISHOP

Jordan Bishop, a frequent Commonweal contributor, lives in Ottawa.

PEACE SCHOLARSHIPS

A DIFFERENT DRUMMER

A NEW WAY TO PAY FOR COLLEGE

Before I became a freshman at the University of Notre Dame in 1981, I was inundated with mail encouraging me to look into ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) scholarships to help finance my education. It was not hard for me to turn down such offers. By temperament I had never been attracted to military life. Still, on the practical level, I faced real difficulties, chief of which was how would I ever finance such an expensive education.

Fortunately, my interest in agriculture translated into a summer job in California's Imperial Valley. It not only helped foot the bill for tuition at Notre Dame but propelled my academic interests toward working on hunger issues, particularly in Africa and Latin America. As a result, long before career decision time arrived, I knew where I wanted to focus my efforts. The Peace Corps offered me an opportunity to go to Africa.

Instead, I chose a much smaller program with the Holy Cross Associates in Chile.

I mention these autobiographical fragments only to help indicate why I feel it is time for Catholic universities to offer ROTC-like scholarships to undergraduates interested in helping to pay for their educations through postgraduation, nonmilitary service opportunities.

The chief problem, of course, is that nonmilitary service is rarely supported with equivalent scholarship funding. Still, the idea of offering scholarships to students willing to undertake community service after graduation—whether internationally through the Peace Corps or domestically through any number of government- and nongovernment-supported initiatives working with poorer communities—makes sense on a number of levels.

Such a program would respond to one of the primary economic challenges our country faces in this post-cold war era: converting from a military to a civilian economy. The debate over military cut-backs and peace dividends ought to include a re-examination of university life as well. It is no longer necessary to train as many new officers as it was in even the recent past. Troop reductions are already taking place, and the 1990 budget accord itself called for downsizing ROTC scholarships 20 percent by 1995. Last year, in fact, 61 of 413 college ROTC programs were terminated and Army ROTC scholarships were reduced by 47 percent, from 3,000 to 1,600. While immediate reductions in Navy and Air Force programs have not yet been as drastic as Army ROTC cutbacks, the 20 percent reduction by 1995 applies to all ROTC branches of the military services.

Notre Dame has by far the largest ROTC program of any Catholic university in the country. Approximately 10 percent of its undergraduate population participates in the program. A 20 percent reduction would translate into a loss of 150 full scholarships. These students would have to come up with alternative financing—or find less expensive college alternatives. When I was at Notre Dame I knew many individuals in the ROTC program who would have pursued alternatives to ROTC if they had been available. A 1988 survey by Michael Hovey and Gordon Zahn, "ROTC and Catholic Education," reported that twenty-two of twenty-four Catholic institutions responding to the survey indicated that they would be likely to participate in an alternative "peace scholarship" program if it were to become available.

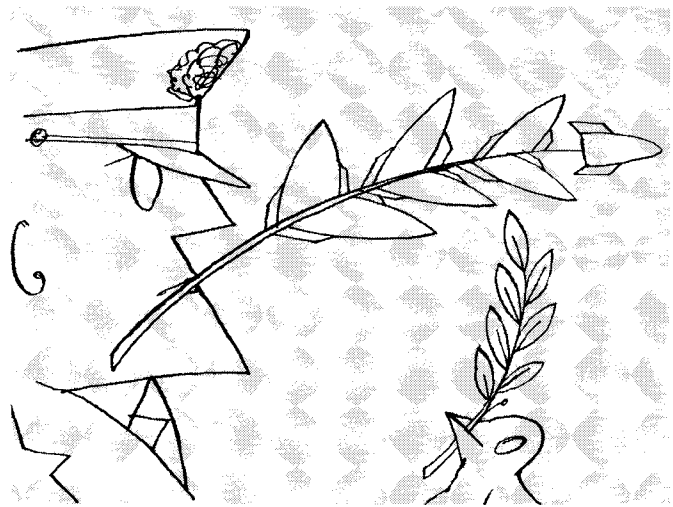
After graduation in 1985 but before leaving for Chile, I wrote to Notre Dame President Theodore Hesburgh to explain why I thought peace scholarships were a sensible idea. He wrote back that such a proposal might go over well with some Peace Corps people he would be seeing, including Loret Miller Ruppe, then head of the agency and later a Notre Dame board member. When I returned from Chile in 1988, I was encouraged to hear Ms. Ruppe broach the idea of a Peace Corps equivalent to ROTC scholarships. She did so at a commencement address at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles; I was left with the impression that the plan was well on its way to being implemented.

Three years later, however, nothing further had developed.

So I wrote Father Hesburgh again and asked for an update. He responded that the idea had not fared well in Washington, and that while he still favored the concept, it would take a lot of "pushing" in Washington to get it through. He implied the time was not favorable.

Now things may be different, and it could just be the time to start pushing. For one thing, President-elect Bill Clinton campaigned on a platform that suggested various options for financing college educations. He spoke of both long-term automatic pay-backs and two-year stints doing community service. By my calculations, the latter would not come close to paying back the debt incurred in financing most private college educations today. But the suggestion is a starting point for discussion. Second, economic survival warrants that we prepare for the future by moving away from a military-focused economy. Finally, there are great unmet needs among the poor, both at home and abroad. On another level—and here again I would offer a personal reflection on Clinton's two-year service proposal—one of the chief drawbacks I experienced with my two-year commitment as a Holy Cross Associate in Chile was that the time was too short. Indeed, I seemed to have to say goodbye just as I had adjusted to the culture and was beginning to make a real contribution. How much better prepared would young students be—and how much more effective—if they were supported generously throughout their undergraduate careers with "peace scholarships" that would be aimed at three- or four-year nonmilitary service opportunities—at home or abroad—following graduation.

Financing such a program is a major concern. The federal government has created one precedent at Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont. A small military college, Norwich has developed a leadership program that allows junior and senior cadets to train for entry in the Peace Corps. The government should extend this program to other schools. But the government should not be the only institution to support such grants. Universities themselves should support such options, as should



corporations and philanthropies. Notre Dame, for example, might develop a peace scholarship program in connection with its Peace Studies Institute. Such an undertaking might provide a model for other departments and institutions interested in enhancing the concept of community service. Marty Fergus, the director of Fordham University's peace studies program, agrees that such institutes as Fordham's are a natural place for offering peace scholarships. But for him the impediment remains the lack of available money. The solution, I believe, rests in part with the universities themselves. If they were to shift such service programs/opportunities from the periphery and promote them as a more central component in their general vision of a university education, the money would be more likely to follow. Catholic universities shouldn't have a hard time endorsing such a concept. It would underscore their unique contribution to American higher education, and enhance the system in general.

BILL JORDAN

Bill Jordan and his wife are preparing for an assignment in Latin America with the Maryknoll Lay Mission Program.

OF SEVERAL MINDS Abigail McCarthy

THE REAL LESSON OF HISTORY

THERE IS NO GOING BACK

Traditionally, Thanksgiving celebrates a mutually happy relationship between Indians and grateful Plymouth colonists. But this year we were reminded that the Anglo-Saxons of New England repaid the kindness of the Indians by cheating them out of their lands and well nigh wiping them out with disease,

rape, and pillage.

Defenders of the colonists might argue that the Indians were not all that friendly. Cape Cod history records that, when the French explorer Champlain ventured landfall there, he and his men aboard ship woke the second day to the sight of Indians dancing gleefully on the beach draped in the skins of the men who had gone ashore

the night before to forage and to wash their clothes. The Indians around Plymouth colony who seemed less warlike had been decimated by illness a few years *before* the colonists arrived (*all* sickness did not arrive with the Europeans) and may have decided that conciliation was the better part of valor. But still the wary colonists took no chances. When they lost half their number in the first terrible winter they buried them in a common grave so that the Indians would not know how many were gone.

To argue this way, however, is to indulge in "presentism." This is the term historians use, according to Douglas Wilson (*Atlantic Monthly*, November 1992) to describe "the malaise that plagues American

discussions of anything and everything concerning the past: the widespread inability to make appropriate allowances for prevailing historical conditions."

Before the quincentennial of Columbus on October 12, we of European ancestry were awash in the guilt induced by reminders from Native Americans that their ancestors' cultures were destroyed and their ancestors enslaved by those who accompanied and followed Columbus. The claim is that the only motive of Columbus and the early Spanish *conquistadores* was greed. The National Council of Churches issued a declaration calling the Columbus event "an invasion and colonization with legalized genocide, slavery, and economic exploitation"—certainly a black-and-white review of history.

Pope John Paul II, arriving in Santo Domingo for the Fourth General Latin American Episcopal Conference, acknowledged the abuses that resulted from Columbus's voyages but expressed gratitude for the evangelization of the Americas: "On October 12, exactly five centuries ago, Admiral Christopher Columbus...arrived in these lands and planted the cross of Christ. That is the beginning of the sowing of the precious seed of faith. And how can we not give thanks for that?" (*Washington Post*, October 13, 1992).

The pope's view is harshly challenged by the arbitrary statement of the Reverend Arthur Cribbs, a United Church of Christ clergyman and an African-American, who sees little or no positive contribution of European Christians to the history of the Americas. "The Spaniards who did speak out against the injustices were the exception....," he says. "The overall effect has been that the majority of Native Americans...have not benefited from Christianity" (*Washington Post*, October 12).

This is "presentism" with a vengeance and there are defenses against it, including the one used by the pope: "[The Europeans] announced the love of God our Savior to people whose sacrifices to their gods included human sacrifice."

It can certainly be argued that ripping out the hearts of one's enemies or of sacrificial virgins is at least comparable in cruelty to burning at the stake; that slavery existed in the Americas before Columbus; that certain pre-Columbian cultures withered and disappeared in the jungle or fell to conquest before the white man appeared; etc. But what is overlooked, I think, is that the whole discussion dismisses five hundred years of history. It conceives of Europeans and the various Indian cultures as static, separate, and as distinct today as they were in 1492.

Richard Rodriguez, an editor of Pacific

News Service and essayist on the "MacNeil-Lehrer Newshour" on Columbus Day, took quiet and stunning exception to this view when he looked into the camera and asked how he was supposed to feel about 1492. The date for him, he said, was a birthday, a birthday of his people, the *mestizos*, the descendants of the union of the Spanish and the Indian. To see history only in terms of the oppressor is to make the conquered ever victims, to ignore the ways in which they transcended loss, absorbed the newcomers, and changed them. The people we call Hispanic are primarily Indian, Rodriguez reminded us. According to David J. Weber's *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (Yale University Press, 1992), reviewed by Nicholas Lemann in the November *Atlantic Monthly*, "The Spaniards, starting with Cortes himself, immediately began inbreeding with the Indians, and their priests developed a New World Catholicism that was a *mestizo* religion, part Indian, part European." Spain sent women to the New World only a few times in three hundred years.

In Rodriguez's view, the proponents of the year of "the indigenous peoples" ignore the complications of history. He sees the rise of a new Indian (*mestizo*) culture extending from Tierra del Fuego to Seattle in the west and New York in the east. Spanish and English, he says, are now Indian languages; Los Angeles is an Indian city; the Catholic church in the Western Hemisphere is an Indian church. And who is to gainsay him?

When one culture encounters another—no matter how bloody the original encounter—an equation is altered forever. Even the Indians of the Plains and the East who did not interbreed with the Spanish (although they did with the French) were changed irrevocably by the arrival of the *conquistadores*. In the West they became a mounted people because the Spanish brought the horse. How different would have been the Indian wars and the buffalo hunts without the sure-footed fast Indian pony! And how different would have been the history of the Southwest Indians like the Navajo and the Hopi without the sheep and goats also brought by the Spanish. The encounter of cultures is an historical fact with consequences with which we must live. There is no going back. □

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THREE GRAVES

WILLIAM J. REWAK

NOT FARE WELL, BUT FARE FORWARD, VOYAGERS

Some little children are ghouls. Some, of course, run and hide when they see a blood-dripping Halloween mask, or they cringe and lean toward their mothers when Dickens's "Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come" beckons Scrooge to look at his own grave. But some run to the grave to look. They wrap cheese-cloth around themselves and limp toward their little sisters in amateurish imitation of Boris Karloff, or secrete away, for evening delectation, the latest edition of "Horror Comics." They are ghouls. Not seriously deranged; they simply find entertainment in the bizarre. There are many of us: witness the millionaire status of Stephen King. And lest the above example of the Mummy suggest that the ghoulish is the domain of the male: Mary Shelley, too, had a streak of the hellish in her.

Deep down, ghouls worry the bone of mortality. Monsters, after all, do spring from death (Frankenstein's monster, Dracula, the Wolf Man, any ghost, any avenger) and they all deliver death; strangely, they do this in the hope of preserving or of capturing life, however perverse that life may be. A preoccupation with monsters is therefore at least a flirtation with the idea that though death is inevitable, we seek some assurance it is not the final, the absolute, end.

Such a flirtation exhibits itself, not only in reading horror stories, but—one of my own favorite pastimes—in visiting graves. Perhaps it's a way of trying to figure out whether or not what was laid to rest under the headstone has had any lasting effect on his or her environment. Do we remember her—and why? Was his promise kept? It is interesting, too, to see that sometimes an age's estimation of the deceased is overblown with gingerbread and angels: time can whittle down the reputation. In other cases, graves of those we now consider great ones are almost lost.

I prefer the hidden, unassuming graves of those whom humanity has come to admire. And because my own professional background is literature, I prefer the quiet graves of those whose lives are marked for all of us in books and poems of granite.

WILLIAM J. REWAK, S.J., is president of Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama.

I enjoy visiting their graves because I am then forced to reflect on their art and on how, through the journeys it affords us, it has altered our consciousness; I am forced to reflect on mortality and how even those who have touched and healed millions with their words must, like the rest of us, end with nothing but a shroud; I reflect on how all of us, teachers and poets—or graveyard caretakers—must bequeath something to our world, otherwise we have wasted our space.

Three graves I have recently visited are those of Jack London, Emily Dickinson, and T.S. Eliot. Each one has an austere dignity, and each has its own story.

The Sonoma Valley, in Northern California, is known today for its wineries and its lush vineyards, but it still holds onto redwood trees, its steep hills still boast a forest of oaks and madrones and Douglas fir. Narrow two-lane roads curve through grassy fields and around clumps of orange poppies, and early morning mist sifts upward through the trees and into the low-lying clouds. This is the landscape Jack London loved.

As a journalist and adventurer London had traveled from his hometown of Oakland to Hawaii, Korea and Japan, Alaska, Australia; he had wandered through Europe; he had sailed round Cape Horn. His writings, too, are filled with travel,



"It's an inside joke."

John Nixon, Jr.
In Purple Ink

Whoever bottled the blood of violets
From which her quill so passionately drank
Clearly foresaw his customer's requirements.

Did she look at the world through amethyst-
Colored binoculars, her irises
The hue of melancholy *fleurs-de-lis*?

Her metaphors were bruises, dropping like
Intoxicated plums upon the paper.
They even have, one notes, a purple smell.

movement: he writes in *The Call of the Wild*, for example, that there is a "boundless delight" in the "indefinite wandering through strange places." Wolf Larsen sails his death ship over all the seas, eternally. Nauri, in the short story, "House of Mapuli," swims through hurricanes, sharks, and dead bodies to arrive peacefully at home.

But the geographical journey is a metaphor for the psychological. When Buck is transported from the "sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley" to the storms of Alaska, we understand the journey to be one of enlightenment, of a return to a vital primitivism that has always lurked, unfelt, in his bones. Travel leads to revelation.

Once, however, London had discovered his favorite spot in the "Valley of the Moon," and near the village of Glen Ellen, he realized he had arrived, finally, at his home. After about 1911, his travels became shorter. He started to build a working ranch. He began construction on an ill-fated, mammoth residence for himself and his wife, Charmian, to be called "Wolf House"—it burned before they moved in and remains today a magnificent, but eerie, shell of volcanic rock and soaring chimneys. London wanted to rebuild but he died, at age forty, in 1916, before he could start.

The entire property is now a state park and the pilgrimage begins in the "House of Happy Walls," the house Charmian built for herself after Jack died. It is now a museum. From there, you can walk almost a mile, in the shade of manzanitas and oaks, to the top of a hill that overlooks a long, narrow valley. There, a moss-covered picket fence surrounds a large red piece of lava rock and under the rock rest his own and Charmian's ashes.

A sign explains that London had remarked to his wife that "I wouldn't mind if you laid my ashes on the knoll where the Greenlaw children are buried. And roll over me a red boulder from the ruins of the Big House." About twenty-five feet from the rock, against a redwood tree, stand two tiny wooden markers: the etched names are virtually gone, but there the two chil-

dren lie. The hill may seem lonely, but it is eminently peaceful. You can see no habitation of any kind. All of London's travels—"the sheer surging of life," as he calls it, all the sailing and walking and horseback-riding, the primitive runs through Australia, and the more sophisticated trains through Paris and Rome—brought him finally to the silence of this hill and this solitary rock.

I thought, as I stood there at that lava rock grave, that we are all programmed to travel, and our enjoyment may lie in the excitement and novelty of the trip itself—as it so obviously did for London—or in the revelation that always awaits us at our final destination. And it may be there is no distinction between the two.

We all want to see something new. If no one has been there before, we are proclaimed discoverers. But even if our new place is peopled, even if hikers are tramping on ahead of us, we act like a discoverer, for our own eyes have not seen that particular color of light there on the horizon of the Sangre de Cristo mountains nor have we smelled the ocean here as it breaks against the boulders scattered along this jagged coast of Maine.

We do not all explore the same landscape. For some, it's the moon; for others, a subatomic particle. Most who travel can be enthralled by the sky of Montana or the harbor of Bodega Bay. I have a friend in England, a famous historian of philosophy, whose personal quest is to visit every park and grassy square in London. He hasn't stopped exploring the twists and turns of the rational mind, but as an elderly citizen he now delights in the smaller discoveries: the way the wind sighs through the trees of Regent's Park, the early spring brightness of roses in Kensington Gardens.

Why do we want to travel? Why does a child, once it can crawl, reach for a knick-knack placed on too low a shelf; why does it stare at, pull apart, and then try to eat its first doll? It must be more than discontent with what we have. When first we open our eyes and see color, do we at the same moment get a fleeting glimpse of another color, another possibility? Or if we look across a valley at a tall peak covered with snow, do we want to see the mountain beyond that? Our senses give us possibility, and we want to make the possibility a reality.

Why? It has to be more than that which programs a bee to carve hexagons out of space and fill them with sweetness.

Amherst, in Massachusetts, is a beautiful, small, typical New England town: one with a commons, a spired white church, plenty of trees turning yellow and gold in the fall, a quality almost of bookishness, of fussy tradition. Comfortable.

And Emily Dickinson's house—now a residence for Amherst faculty—fits into that picture. It sits up off the road on a small hill, a large, two-storied handsome brick structure with white molding, surrounded by trees. As I stood in front of it, I tried to imagine her sitting upstairs, day after day, listening to the voices from the parlor and penning her short notes to the world. It is a spacious house, spacious enough for an imagination that wanted to rove and explore.

The cemetery is several blocks away, and she is buried there with several other family members toward the back, in a plot surrounded by an intricate, black wrought-iron fence. I stood there for a moment, on a fall day, and noted the potted plant someone had placed in the middle of her grave. On such a first visit, there is always a touch of sentimentality; after all, here was someone I have admired, I've studied and memorized her lines. For her especially, there is an inevitable regret that time did not allow her greater latitude.

I turned back toward the entrance, saying something unconsciously to myself—perhaps, “I’d better get going.” I walked down the path and past two men who were cutting grass. Then I stopped. I thought, “Where am I going? Is someone waiting for me? Do I have a conference to attend? Do I have to rush somewhere to dress for dinner?” I chuckled. Here I am on a weekend vacation during a sabbatical year and I’m rushing off to—where? I turned around, walked back past the two men again (“What’s this guy doing?” I could hear them thinking), sat down against a tree next to the grave—and just sat there.

I did not engage in any heavy-duty contemplation of death, but I did recall her lines, “Because I could not stop for Death/He kindly stopped for me.” I don’t know why Emily could not stop for death, but I do know that for most of us the reason is lack of time. We are too busy for him. Emily knew, however, that in his kindness he always has time to stop for us.

This may sound ghoulish, but it is not: We all must learn to stop, to pause, to recapitulate and recalculate, to think and to pray, because in doing so we prepare for death. Sitting there on green grass, grown strong, as Whitman says, by the corpses lying under it, and looking at her simple headstone (“Emily Dickinson/Born/Dec. 10, 1830/Called Back/May 15, 1886”), I reflect that we do not often pause in a busy life to think of mortality; we do not want to stop moving because to do so would make us vulnerable to the uncomfortable admission that we will die. But we have to accept that and prepare for it. It does not only happen to everyone else, it happens to me. I will, someday, lie under a stone.

Ironically, we can distance ourselves from death by reading about it. Emily’s words can lead us into literary excursions that delight us because of linguistic intricacies or metaphoric allusions or, in her case especially, the mysteries of punctuation and stress. We can dance around death’s literary expression and thus depersonalize it. Such dancing she never did and we should follow her example. Her poems are hard, personal meditations on the fact of her mortality; she feared death, she sought it as a lover, she was crushed by its indifference. Its fingers were always on her skin.

We cannot live a rich life without the touch of death. For death reminds us of what we have. Emily Dickinson herself took advantage of each moment, and she carved out those moments for us in words that will surely last longer than she could ever have hoped. She lived the richest life of all.

If the first grave was in the mountains of Northern California, and the second across the country in a quiet college town in Massachusetts, the third is farther eastwards yet, across the ocean in a little village in England: T.S. Eliot’s in East Coker.

A

memorial stone lies in the floor of Westminster Abbey, in Poet’s Corner, but Eliot’s ashes are buried in the small church of St. Michael’s in that Somerset village.

I had first met Eliot in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” and found that poem peculiarly suitable for high school seniors. Since then, I have taken the opportunity to share him with students as often as possible. It is not easy to explain, with any degree of clarity, one’s likes and dislikes. I could say I respond—because of some lingering adolescent *maladie de coeur*—to the pinched despair of “Prufrock.” I could say that because of my strong Jesuit classical training, I delight in puzzling out his more recondite allusions, or that I am sympathetic to his vision of the creative Word, and that when he says there is “Only the hardly, barely prayable/Prayer of the one Annunciation,” I understand. If he is at times too esoteric or too precious, he learned later to soften the edges with a wisdom he had achieved through suffering, a mellowness he had learned through love.

How the empathetic connections are fused may be irrelevant; the point is enjoyment, and learning through that enjoyment. I have learned much from Eliot. It was important to make the pilgrimage to East Coker.

I had arrived by train at Yeovil Junction, from Salisbury, a little after lunch. Since no trains go to East Coker, I assumed there would be a bus connection. I walked around outside the station but could find no bus schedule; a young man was standing outside the station next to a taxi, so I asked him, “How much to East Coker?” “About two miles—that’s two quid.” I figured that was better than waiting for a forty-pence bus ride that might not materialize.

He deposited me, in a light drizzle, at the door of St. Michael’s. It sits on the top of a hill, just a block or two from the village, surrounded by lush green sloping lawns that cover several ancient gravestones. There was no one around—anywhere. It was as if a Martian ship had landed and scooped everyone up and away. Well, I thought, this atones for the mob scene at the memorial in Westminster Abbey the previous day (how we tourists can stain, by our persistence and numbers, the character of any hallowed ground).

Eliot’s remains lie almost unnoticed—you have to search for the small wall plaque—in a dark corner of the church. An admirable gesture of near-anonymity. His poems and his life are public; let his resting-place be private.

I sat on a bench and read through the “East Coker” section of Eliot’s *Four Quartets*. His fire and rose may at first seem too vibrant a memory for that secluded corner—but then maybe not. If all our striving, the suffering and love and intelligence, is to end in the peace that passes understanding, then the calm that resides there, in that holy darkness, is peculiarly appropriate for a poet who, though filled with the energy and excitement of creation, was also a gentle soul. “The houses,” he said, “are all gone under the sea./The dancers are all gone under the hill.”

I left the church, presuming that all I had to do was to go to the center of the village and catch a bus or a taxi. But I began

POEMS

Nancy G. Westerfield

Go Dancing

But you did not. And tonight, reading
Yet another obituary for a dancer
Dead of it, I recast you in your roles:
Le Corsair, Scheherezade's slave,
The awakening Prince. Once, in this very
Room, you sat dancing: even at rest
With legs crossed, drink in hand,
You were a sprinter of words across musical
Spaces, all the outstretched untangle
Of muscle still sensuous with speed.
No, you did not go dancing; the last
Extension of your long, curved feet
From the bedsheets was bone and open
Sore, to be touched with tender horror.
My partner, somewhere they go dancing.

Motion Sickness

We die of it, whatever the duly
Notarized cause of death on the official
Certificate. Begun at birth with that
Colossal launching out of innerspace of womb
Into planetary orbit, we pursue orbiting
Breakneck, however uneventful orbiting may
Become: less circling the globe on momentous
Pilgrimages than a daily round of minute
Distances, a grindstone treadmill. We are
Sped upon our ways with false symptoms
Of health, the motion sickness barely
Noticed as a passing vertigo of stress,
Until less and less our lives move us
To advance, and we are, we say, losing momentum.
We are gaining it. At speeds surpassing light,
The snatch from orbit comes, launching
Us colossally into innerspace of night.

to be concerned when, after walking down the one winding street that holds the village together, I saw neither a car nor a bus stop; even the general store was closed.

I walked back to the church. A large dog, of indeterminate parentage, arthritic but trying to be vicious for the sake of pride, jumped out from behind the cemetery wall and barked at me.

"Sally," someone yelled, "enough of that, will you."

A man of about seventy-five came around the wall, holding a handsaw. He was slightly stooped, bareheaded, with gray eyebrows that seemed to explode all over his forehead; he wore a long corduroy jacket, overalls, and heavy boots.

"Don't mind her," he said. "Are you looking for something?"

"I was hoping for a bus back to Yeovil Junction," I answered.

"Oh, my dear, this is Somerset. A bus may come today. But it may come tomorrow."

"Is there a taxi around?"

He laughed softly, as if he knew he was dealing with someone slightly daft. "Oh, I don't think so. And it's a bit of a walk, you see."

I allowed as how it was. And I must have looked worried for he said, "Come on, then, I'll take you. I've just been clearing part of the cemetery here but it can wait. I have to be sure you leave England with a good impression of the English. That is, if you don't mind my poor car—and if you don't mind riding with Sally."

I thought: I hope Sally doesn't mind.

We squeezed into a mini-car that had seen better days under Churchill; Sally sat right behind me with her wet nose nuzzling my ear. Her hoary head bounced on my shoulder as we drove

down some of the primitive paths that are, in the country districts of England, called roads.

"Are you a native of these parts?" I asked.

"No, not at all, I was born in Birmingham, you see, but after the war—that would be the first war—my father moved us all here, and here I've been ever since." We were driving past a field of corn: "At that time, all these fields were owned by the squire, now they're all cut up, and all private, that's the way it is. I used to walk through these fields, but if you do that now, they tell you to get off the property. No, it's a shame."

We negotiated a sharp turn with grinding gears; Sally lost her balance in the back and fell noisily on some paint cans.

"You come for the church?" he asked. I explained about wanting to see the grave. "They come from all over—from as far away as California or even Japan. Strange chap from New Zealand, he fell asleep in the cemetery." Probably couldn't get out of East Coker, I thought to myself.

"Tom Eliot only showed up once or twice here," he said, "so folks don't know him, but we're all proud that he decided to stay in our church. I haven't spent much time with his poems, but maybe someday I will. Bit modern for my tastes."

We were now driving down a dirt path that led right into a barn, and we nearly came face to face with a resident cow. "This isn't the right road. Now where is it? I retired about five years ago, and I haven't been around here much lately. We'd better turn back. But don't fret, we'll get there."

We passed a particularly beautiful, white-washed home with a thatched roof and dark beams and surrounded by a stone wall that was covered by the year's last geraniums. I noted that

Americans consider these homes extremely attractive. "People from London do, too," he said. "They come down and buy the whole building, fix it up for just two people. That one used to be three cottages, with five or six children in each cottage. And snooty, they are. They come down on the weekend and don't care about us who know the place. You know what Dryden says about that, don't you?" I perked up my ears, turned and looked at him, "He says, 'How anxious are our cares, and yet how vain/The bent of our desires.' Now there's a poet who knew what he was talking about."

We came to a small crossroads: two paths converged. He guessed on a turn to the right, and there was the station. He stopped the car, sat back stiffly, and said, "Wouldn't want you to think the English aren't hospitable." I thanked him profusely. If he had not offered to take me I would have been walking the lanes and fields of Somerset for days, and sleeping in cemeteries at night. I hoped he would find his precarious way back to East Coker.

The day would have been memorable enough if the only image I brought with me from East Coker was that of a simple plaque on a dim wall of St. Michael's. But this gentle man was a grace unsought, definitely unexpected. An offspring, I'm sure, of English warriors, a day-laborer who keeps St. Michael's cemetery clear of dead branches, who quotes Dryden, who lives a full life without venturing too far beyond the walls of his village—and who is generously concerned that bewildered foreigners think well of English hospitality.

I suspect Eliot's spirit is not unhappy keeping company with him.

That evening, after the ride back to Salisbury, and sitting down to a meal and a glass of wine—and knowing I would no doubt never return to that village—I did think of Eliot's line from the "Dry Salvages": "Not fare well, / But fare forward, voyagers."

That might be the theme of these journeys. For we should not visit the past to confront it and then, satisfied, dismiss it; it remains a part of us. The words of these great writers will never be dismissed. And neither should we visit those graves with an air simply of nostalgia—though some of that is inevitable. Their spirits should push us forward. The roiling action of Jack London, the sharp crystal of Emily Dickinson, the hard-won wisdom and theological breadth of T.S. Eliot: these are characteristics that challenge us to know ourselves and to seek to know the world.

It is a long voyage, itself: from running around graves as a child, and watching Dracula rise from his coffin in Technicolor, to contemplating the gifts that great writers have left us. But it is a seamless voyage, for in both cases we are concerned that death not be the end. Childish perversity aside, what we are really unconsciously looking for in such young adventurers is an assurance that something we recognize as horrible and seemingly definite can be treated as fanciful, and that it therefore can be assimilated into a child's innocent and hopeful view of the world. To play outrageously with the fact of mortality, at that age, is to be able to accept it.

And then, later, to sit with ease near the headstones of

London, Dickinson, and Eliot is to know that the riches of life travel far beyond the grave. □

STAGE

GENDER WARS

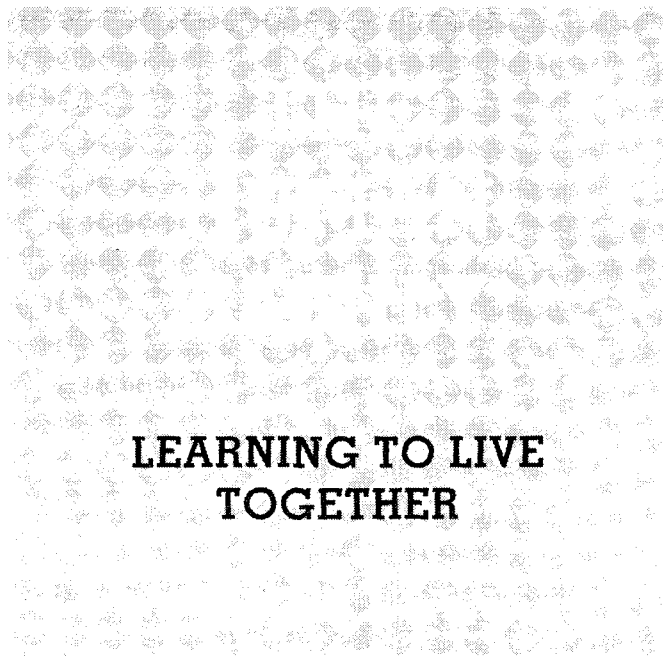
'OLEANNA' & 'DESDEMONA'

The characters in David Mamet's *Oleanna* have names—John and Carol—but they might as well have been called professor and student or man and woman or accused and accuser, or simply victim 1 and victim 2. Judging by the conversations I overheard as I left the Orpheum Theater, the play is going to stir up a dollop of controversy. Depending on where one stands, John is either a well-meaning professor at first intent on helping a confused student or a sexist and elitist whose every casual word is an indication of his comfortable place in the power structure. Carol is either a victim of that structure or a radical feminist who wishes to replace the professor as power figure. Neither character, in so far as the two are characters rather than opposing points of view, is particularly attractive. Each in his/her way is a whiner and completely self-absorbed although both explain their words and actions in terms of some larger idea or entity. John professes to love teaching; Carol eventually speaks for her group (an unidentified gathering of arbiters of political correctness), the students at large, and the college.

The first act provides the text for the mutual misunderstanding to follow; Carol's only concern at this point seems to be her grade. If, as she says, she does not understand anything said in class nor anything in the professor's book, she probably should not be in college at all, but this is not a real student in a real college. She is an occasion for John to do his understanding-professor turn. He sees himself as an ironist and an iconoclast, dismissing education, which is what he teaches. Carol's confusion about the apparent split between subject and approach becomes an excuse for him to turn avuncular, autobiographical, and preachifying. He may be sincere in his attempt to help her, but his language—typically Mametian (except for the absence of obscenity) in its mixture of pretentious vocabulary and broken sentences, its stops and starts—suggests either his own omissions or a calculated effort to convince her that she and he are alike—which of course they are not. He rides over her simple question about her grade with a deluge of presumed concern, affection, sympathy. He even puts his arm around her when she seems especially upset.

Carol and John's initial meeting is interrupted by phone calls from John's wife and his lawyer, indicating his expectation of tenure and of a house he is buying to celebrate his new security. Presumed security. Carol returns in the second act—her awkward jumper dress replaced by a mannish suit—after having filed a detailed complaint with the tenure committee which, acting out

(Continued on page 20)



LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER

Books for Children and Young Adults

The following titles have been selected from among the many published during 1991-1992 to cover a wide range of ages, interests, and readability. Those books have been listed which seem best to portray relationships among people of different origins, races, and religions, and which depict their varied backgrounds. The list is the result of agreement by a committee of experts in the field of literature for children and young adults. The following selection from the complete list is presented by the publishers named below.

All-Bright Court, by Connie Porter. Houghton Mifflin, 1991. \$19.95

The African-American residents of All-Bright Court, a crumbling tenement next to a steel plant outside Buffalo, show the fortitude and faith needed to hold on to their hopes and dreams despite the lost promises of the 1960s.

(12 and up)

The Almond Orchard, by Laura Jane Coats. Macmillan Publishing Co., New York, 1992. \$14.95

At the beginning of the century, a little girl's father plants an almond orchard. She grows up along with the trees while observing the cycle of seasons and harvesting. (3 to 8)

Amazing Grace, by Mary Hoffman. Illustrated by Caroline Binch. Dial, 1991. \$13.95

Grace is a wonderful actress, and when her class is going to put on "Peter Pan," she wants to play Peter. But her classmates tell her that she cannot be Peter not only because she is a girl but also because she is African-American. Her mother and Nana know better, and teach her that if she puts her mind to it, Grace can do anything. And she does. Exuberantly illustrated. (4 to 8)

American Refugees, by Jim Hubbard. University of Minnesota Press, 1991. \$19.95

Haunting documentary photographs vividly depict the lives of modern American exiles—the homeless.

(10 and up)

An Ancient Heritage, by Brent Ashabrunner. HarperCollins, 1991. \$14.95

A history of Arab immigration to the United States, the book also explores the cultural experience of Arab Americans as they try to adjust to life in the new country.

(12 and up)

Apartheid: Celebrations of Color, by Roger Rose and Patra McSharry, eds. Icarus World Issues Series, Rosen Press, 1991. \$16.95/\$8.95 paperback

Eight writers and four photographers capture in short stories, drama, and photographs the horror and the hope of life in South Africa.

(12 and up)



At the Crossroads, by Rachel Isadora. Greenwillow Books, 1991. \$15.00

Children in a South African township wait through the night for their fathers to come home in this joyful affirmation of family life. (5 to 8)

The Auction, by Jan Andrews. Pictures by Karen Reczuch. Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992. \$12.95

The farm is being sold at auction and a family remembers what the land meant to grandma and grandpa. (4 to 8)

Bigmama's, by Donald Crews. Greenwillow Books, 1991. \$13.95

A fond remembrance of the author's boyhood summers spent at his grandparents' home in Florida. The scenes of African-American family life are illustrated with warm colors and closely observed detail. (4 to 7)

The Borning Room, by Paul Fleischman. HarperCollins, 1991. \$13.95

A special room where family members go to give birth or die is the focal point of this gentle story about an Ohio family in the 1800s. (12 and up)

Chicken Sunday, written and illustrated by Patricia Polacco. Philomel, 1992. \$14.95

Patty and Stewart and Winston may be different colors and religions, but they are like family. When Miss Eula longs for a new Easter hat, they decide to work to get it for her. Although they encounter obstacles, everything is happily resolved, and Miss Eula wears her new hat to church on Easter. (5 to 8)

The China Year, by Emily Cheney Neville. HarperCollins, 1991. \$15.95

Henrietta Rich, a New York City teen-ager, spends a year in China when her father accepts a teaching position in Beijing. (12 and up)

Dancing with the Indians, by Angela Shelf Medearis. Illustrated by Samuel Byrd. Holiday House, 1991. \$14.95

Before the Civil War, the Seminoles made Grandpa a member of their nation when he ran away from slavery. Two cultures are explored in verses recounting the family's return to the reservation for a tribal meeting. (5 to 8)

Selected by...

Janet Austin, Media Specialist/Librarian, Clifton High School, Clifton, New Jersey

Joseph Benkovitz, Librarian, Springfield Gardens High School, New York

Michael Patrick Hearn, Author, Critic, Columbia University

Ellen V. LiBretto, Young Adult Consultant, Queens Borough Public Library, Jamaica, New York

Susan Pine, Children's Materials Specialist, Office of Children's Services, New York Public Library, New York, New York

Karlan Sick, Young Adult Specialist, New York Public Library, Bronx, New York

Mary Jane Tacchi, Assistant Coordinator, Young Adult Services, New York Public Library, New York, New York

This edition of "The Human Family" is dedicated to the memory of Christine Behrmann, a valued member of the Selection Committee, who died December 1991.

Families Are Different, by Nina Pelligrini. Holiday House, 1991. \$14.95

When a six-year-old Korean girl begins to worry because she and her older sister don't look like their adoptive parents, she is reassured to learn that families come in all sizes, colors, and shapes. Love is the glue that binds them together in this brightly illustrated picture book. (3 to 6)

Fathers, Mothers, Sisters, Brothers, by Mary Ann Hoberman. Illustrated by Marilyn Hafner. Joy Street/Little Brown, 1991. \$14.95

A variety of poems about members of all kinds of families from a wryly amusing child's point of view. (5 to 10)

Filtered Images: Women Remembering Their Grandmothers, edited by Susan L. Aglietti. Vintage 45 Press (P.O. Box 266, Orinda, CA 94563), 1992. \$14.95

In poems, essays, and short stories, more than seventy women share memories of their grandmothers, reflecting on the courage, leadership, and commitment which helped shape the destiny of future generations. (14 and up)

Finding the Green Stone, by Alice Walker. Paintings by Catherine Deeter. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1991. \$16.95

The beauty of a stone and a rising awareness of the world around him help a boy find the good within himself.

(3 to 8)

Georgia to Georgia: Making Friends in the U.S.S.R., by Laurie Dolphin, photographs by E. Alan McGee. Tambourine Books, 1991. \$13.95

Children from the southern state tell in their own words what it was like to meet children from the former Soviet Republic.

(6 to 8)

How My Family Lives in America, by Susan Kuklin. Bradbury, 1992. \$13.95

Photo-stories of three children whose families come from Senegal, Puerto Rico, and Taiwan and how they live in New York City.

(5 to 8)

How the García Girls Lost Their Accents, by Julia Alvarez. Plume, 1992. \$9.00

A warm story about the four García girls' adjustment to life and language in the United States after fleeing the Dominican Republic.

(14 and up)

The Invisible Thread, by Yoshiko Uchida, Julian Messner, 1991. \$12.95

The moving memoir of Yoshiko Uchida who longs to be accepted as any other American but slowly comes to realize that it is the "invisible thread" linking her to her Japanese heritage that gives her the strength to endure life in a World War II internment camp.

(12 and up)

Kwanzaa: An African American Celebration of Culture and Cooking, by Eric V. Copage. Design and illustrations by Cheryl Carrington. William Morrow and Co., 1991. \$25.00



Stories illustrating the seven principles of Kwanzaa and recipes from people of African descent around the world provide an important resource for this unique celebration now observed by more than 5 million Americans.

(14 and up)

The Lily Cupboard, by Shulamith Levey Oppenheim. Illustrated by Ronald Himler. HarperCollins, 1992. \$15.00

During the dark days of World War II, a young Jewish girl is sent to live with a Dutch family who hide her from the Germans.

(5 to 8)

The Man from the Other Side, by Uri Orlev. Translated from the Hebrew by Hillel Halkin. Houghton Mifflin, 1991. \$13.95

In the days before the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Marek and his family hide a Jewish man. Based on a true story.

(12 and up)

My Grandmother's Journey, by John Cech. Bradbury, 1991. \$14.95

Safe in bed, Korie listens to her grandmother's tale of growing up in Russia where a kindness to the gypsies helped Grandma, her husband, and child to survive war and famine. Richly colored folk-art illuminates each page of this picture book.

(4 to 8)

Now Is Your Time: The African American Struggle for Freedom, by Walter Dean Myers. HarperCollins, 1992. \$15.00

The author's search for his own family imparts a special meaning to the history of Africans in America from the time of the slave ships, to the plantations, to the Civil Rights Movement.

(9 to 14)

On Mother's Lap, by Ann Herbert Scott. Illustrated by Patricia Cullen-Clark. Clarion Books, 1992. \$14.95

Up North, in his Eskimo village, little Michael finds some time to spend with his mother while his baby sister is asleep. But when she wakes up, Michael learns there is room for her, too, on their mother's lap.

(2 to 5)

A Picture Book of Harriet Tubman, by David A. Adler. Illustrated by Samuel Byrd. Holiday House, 1992. \$14.95

Vivid illustrations and concise text relate the life story of the famous conductor on the Underground Railroad.

(5 to 8)

Powerful Days, by Michael S. Durham. Stewart, Tabori & Chang, New York, 1991. \$24.95 paperback

Charles Moore's eloquent black and white photographs of

the Civil Rights Movement serve as a history of those turbulent days, and a reminder of the on-going struggle for democracy and equality that this and future generations must continue. (12 and up)

Pueblo Storyteller and Totem Pole, by Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith. Photographs by Lawrence Migdale. Holiday House, 1991 & 1992. \$14.95 each

These handsome picture books, illustrated with stunning full-color photographs, explore the cultures and particular arts of the Cochiti Pueblo in New Mexico and the Tsimshians in Washington. Each demonstrates how the children, too, are carrying on the old traditions and contains an old tale of the particular people. (both 8 to 12)

Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust, by Gay Block and Malka Drucker. Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1992. \$49.95/\$29.95 paperback

The unforgettable stories of self-proclaimed "ordinary" people who risked everything, even their lives and those of their families, to save Jews marked for death during the Holocaust. Contains wartime and contemporary photos of those involved. (14 and up)

Somewhere in the Darkness, by Walker Dean Myers. Scholastic, 1992. \$14.95

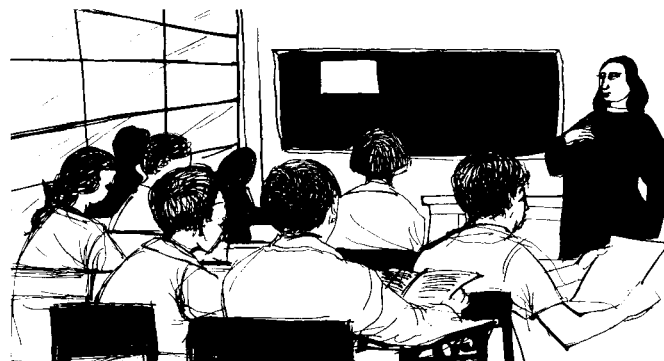
Things are going fine for Jimmy until he meets a stranger standing in a dark hallway—Crab, an escaped convict—the father Jimmy never knew. Crab takes Jimmy on a highway odyssey halfway across the country in a desperate attempt to establish a relationship with his son and convince him of his innocence. (12 and up)

The Star Fisher, by Laurence Yep. Morrow Junior Books, 1991. \$12.95

The oldest daughter tells the heartwarming and often funny story of her Chinese family's move from Ohio to West Virginia in the 1920s. (9 to 14)

Taking Sides, by Gary Soto. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991. \$15.95

Fourteen-year-old Lincoln Mendoza, an aspiring basketball player, must come to terms with his divided loyalties when he moves from the Latino inner city to a white suburban neighborhood. (12 and up)



Tree of Cranes, by Allen Say. Houghton Mifflin, 1991. \$16.95

A poignant story of a Japanese boy's first Christmas as his mother remembers her own holidays in California. Exquisite full-page art warmly complements the text. (4 to 7)

Uncle's New Suit, by Lisa Passen. Henry Holt, 1992. \$14.95

When impecunious Uncle Carmen needs a suit to wear to his new job, his loving Italian family arranges for him to appear to win one. (5 to 8)

Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen, by Dyanne DiSalvo-Ryan. Morrow Junior Books, 1991. \$13.95

A young boy learns not to fear the homeless when he spends a day helping his Uncle Willie volunteer at a soup kitchen. (5 to 8)

Undying Glory: The Story of the Massachusetts 54th Regiment, by Clinton Cox. Scholastic, 1991. \$14.95

During the Civil War, African-American men from across the United States joined the only all-black combat unit in the Union forces to fight against prejudice and for freedom and honor. (9 to 14)

Year of Impossible Goodbyes, by Sook Nyul Choi. Houghton Mifflin, 1991. \$13.95

After enduring the horrors of the Japanese invasion of North Korea, Sookan and her family find they are no better off under Communist rule. Escape to South Korea would be dangerous, but offers the only hope of freedom. This story follows closely events in the author's childhood. (12 and up)

For the complete "Human Family" booklist, send a number 10 envelope, self-addressed and stamped to:
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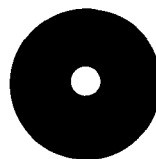
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12/4/92

(Continued from page 15)

of a need to get on with the play (or to indicate Mamet's suspicion that the forces of "political correctness" have taken over campuses today), has rejected his promotion. Their roles are now reversed, he is the petitioner, she the power figure. He continues to try to explain himself and when she starts to leave he holds her by force. In the final scene, she agrees to save him if he accepts her group's list of books to be banned from class. When he finds his own book on the list, he explodes in rage and high moral rhetoric and orders her out of his office. A phone call lets him know that he has now been charged with attempted rape. As she goes, she tosses him the last straw ("And don't call your wife 'Baby'") which drives him to violence. He throws her viciously around the stage until both end in exhaustion, staring at one another, each indicating his/her perception of the other as enemy.

The overstated characters balance one another, making for a standoff of the ideas they represent. Although the battle is unresolved, the play remains a fascinating disquisition on power, and it is impressively performed by William H. Macy and Rebecca Pidgeon under the direction of the author.



ne of the charges against John is that he is pedantic. *Pedant* is used more positively (if comically) in Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* at the Classic Stage Company Theatre, but the sexist, elitist uni-

versity is in full swing in the Canadian playwright's Shakespearean pastiche. The protagonist (Constance Ledbelly) is a very model of the conventional eccentric spinster scholar. She has spent ten years writing the articles and speeches that have made her beloved, Professor Claude Knight, academically desirable enough to win him a chair at Oxford, toward which he heads happily, a younger graduate student in tow, leaving the abandoned Constance with only the prospect of a job in Regina and an unfinished dissertation. She has spent the same ten years trying to crack the sorcerer's code of a manuscript which she believes is the source of *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* and which will prove that the two coincidence-ridden tragedies are really comedies and that Desdemona and Juliet are the dominant figures in the plays. Through a bit of magic (i.e., a playwright's gimmick), Constance is carried off first to Cyprus and then Verona, where she disrupts the plots in progress, becomes the wise clown figure she expects to find and, joining forces with the two Shakespeare heroines, becomes her own woman and breaks her obsession with the professor. A feminist play, then, but it is primarily a literary game in which MacDonald makes comedies—farces, more like—out of the tragedies and scatters hints of other sources—some lines from *Hamlet* and a ghost who drags chains and cashboxes as though Hamlet's father were Jacob Marley. There are funny juxtapositions, but the device finally defeats itself, dissolving into hysterical tedium. The play is mounted with great energy, four of the five actors playing all of the characters but Constance. The appeal of the production, however, lies not in the dexterity of the quick-change artists but in Cherry Jones, who makes a wonderfully beguiling character out of what is essentially a stereotype.

GERALD WEALES

Critics' choices for Christmas

Doris Grumbach

DORIS GRUMBACH, a novelist, essayist, and longtime contributor to *Commonweal*, is the author most recently of *Coming into the End Zone* (W.W. Norton & Company).

Between writing books, I embark on a gluttonous binge of reading them. The first part of the year I was writing, and so I read almost nothing. Then in July my conspicuous consumption of books, at the rate of about one a day, began. What follows is a selection from that gormandizing: *The Emperor's Last Stand: A Journey to St. Helena* (Pantheon, \$22, 277 pp.) by Julia Blackburn, is an account of Napoleon's last six years of exiled life on a remote island told so perfectly that it reads like a beautifully written novel.

At Weddings and Wakes (Farrar, Straus, Giroux, \$19, 213 pp.) by Alice McDermott. This first-rate work, about an Irish-Catholic family in Brooklyn and Long Island, introduced me to this young and most talented novelist, and sent me back to reading two of her excellent earlier books, *A Bigamist's Daughter* and *That Night* (both available in paperback from Harper Perennial).

Intoxicated by My Illness (Clarkson/Potter, \$18, 134 pp.) by Anatole Broyard. An original, intelligent, and witty view by a literary critic of the experience of dying of cancer, a treatment of the subject of being sick like no other I have ever read.

Volcano Lover (Farrar, Straus, Giroux, \$22, 419 pp.). Called in the subtitle "A Romance," by the extremely talented critic and novelist Susan Sontag, it is anything but; instead it is an inventive and humor-

ous view of the lives of Emma and William Hamilton, and of course Lord Nelson. Beyond that it is a lovely, dense tapestry of eighteenth-century aristocratic life lived in the shadow of Mount Vesuvius.

Eleanor Roosevelt, Volume I, 1885-1933 (Viking, \$27.50, 587 pp.), by Blanche Wiesen Cook. A brilliant start to the recounting of the life of the great first lady, until she enters the White House. In every sense, a readable, credible, well-researched work, which brings to life the complex, admirable woman Eleanor Roosevelt was.

Waiting to Exhale (Viking, \$22, 409 pp.) by Terry McMillan is this writer's third interesting novel, about four black, middle-class women, who are survivors, and the men to whom they are attached. I think *The Disappearing Act* and *Mama* (both in paper from Washington Square Press) are even better, but the three establish McMillan as a genuine fictional voice.



George W. Hunt

GEORGE W. HUNT, S.J., is editor-in-chief of *America* magazine.

The poet W.H. Auden once said that "Pleasure is by no means an infallible, critical guide—but it is the least fallible." So, it is in this Audenesque spirit that I recommend the following random selection of recently released books.

To my mind, the book-of-the-year in Catholic biography is William W. Meissner's psychobiography of the founder of the Jesuit order, *Ignatius of Loyola: The Psychology of a Saint* (Yale, \$35, 480 pp.). Father Meissner, both a Jesuit and a practicing psychoanalyst, lucidly recounts the extraordinary life of Ignatius against the turbulent ecclesiastical and social background of the sixteenth century, and then he interprets the psychodynamics of that life by a "look within," attempting to uncover the complex interplay of human motivation and religious experience. The result is a modest, sensible yet insightful reading that is never less than fascinating and endlessly informative. A must-read.

Cardinal William Henry O'Connell of Boston, who reigned (not too strong a word) over the Athens of America for thirty-seven years, would not be deemed a saint by the most charitable standards. Nonetheless—or perhaps because of this—he has inspired a wonderful biography by James M. O'Toole, *Militant and Triumphant: William Henry O'Connell and the Catholic Church in Boston, 1859-1944* (Notre Dame, \$38.95, 320 pp.). Anyone who grows misty-eyed with romantic nostalgia over the good old, pre-Vatican II days of the American church is fated to have his/her

eyes blink open with surprise on reading this book. Had Edwin O'Connor known but half the story of the good cardinal that this biography reveals, his *Last Hurrah* would still be required reading as a cautionary tale in every rectory.

The rather depressing 1992 presidential campaign demanded personal restoratives, and I discovered one in Eric Alterman's dissection of our political media-celebrities (George Will, Henry Kissinger, John McLaughlin, Pat Buchanan, et al.) in *Sound and Fury: The Washington Punditocracy and the Collapse of American Politics* (HarperCollins, \$23, 352 pp.). Alterman's argument is a bit too apocalyptic for my taste, but his concerns are well-placed, and his analyses and anecdotes are often very witty and incisive. A worthy companion piece is the report done by White House correspondents Michael Duffy and Dan Goodgame, who have covered the Bush administration from the beginning. Their title and subtitle encapsulate the narrative and thematic thrust of their report, *Marching in Place: The Status Quo Presidency of George Bush* (Simon and Schuster, \$23, 316 pp.).

The finest close-up account of the film industry that I have ever read is by Julie Salamon, film critic for the *Wall Street Journal*, and it is temptingly and appropriately titled *The Devil's Candy* (Houghton Mifflin, \$24, 434 pp.). Salamon's report, from misconception to disastrous aftermath, centers on the making of the mega-bust movie, *Bonfire of the Vanities*. For those who find it a mystery that talented people, armed with unlimited budgets and equally unlimited "artistic" freedom, can create a calamity, this is the book of answers. (And I defy anyone reading it to resist the ghoulish impulse to rent the video as a confirming accompaniment. Devil's candy, indeed.)

Another outstanding study, this one wedding history with analysis, is Steven Vineburg's *Method Actors: Three Generations of an Acting Style* (Schirmer, \$24.95, 364 pp.). Vineburg traces the complicated origins of the Method in the Group Theater, its development in the work of its second-generation (Montgomery Clift, Marlon Brando, James Dean, et al.), and of its contemporary practitioners (Paul Newman, Jack Nicholson, Gene Hackman, etc.). The result is a jargon-free,

graceful overview of a varied, though distinctive, technique, interwoven with penetrating analyses of particular actors and their styles. A thoughtful, intelligent book.

For some reason—perhaps an over-reverence for style and subtlety—it now takes me ten times as long to read good fiction as it does nonfiction. However, in the past six months I have read one excellent novel—in manuscript. Its author is Peter Quinn, and it is an historical novel, titled *Poor Banished Children of Eve*, that interlaces the stories of several fascinating characters and reaches its climax in the events of the 1863 draft riots in New York City during our Civil War. This novel is set for publication by Viking in summer 1993. Watch for it.

Don Wycliff

DON WYCLIFF is editorial page editor of the Chicago Tribune.

President Lyndon Johnson, after signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, is said to have remarked, "Well, I just gave the South to the Republicans for the next forty years."

Shrewd though he was, Johnson didn't know the half of it. The Democratic party's embrace of civil rights—to be more specific, of the cause of redress, advancement, and equality for black Americans—led to an historic alteration of the political landscape not just of the South, but of the entire nation.

The story of that great shift is the subject of *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics*, by Thomas Edsall, with Mary D. Edsall (Norton, \$10.95, 258 pp.). Published in hardcover in 1991, it was reissued in paperback and with a new afterword this year. It is, in considerable part, an effort to reckon what the Edsalls describe as "the political costs of a morally ambitious undertaking"—black equality.

Johnson committed the nation and the Democratic party to that undertaking immediately upon taking office after John Kennedy's assassination. The Democrats

have been paying the political costs ever since, through their persistent inability to win the presidency. (Jimmy Carter's victory in 1976, after the Republicans had all but committed suicide as a party, was the exception to the rule.)

It would be hard to think of another factor—whether the coming of age of the baby boomers, the emergence of women, even the shift from an industrial to a postindustrial economy—that has affected American politics as deeply and persistently over the past quarter century as race has. And, until *Chain Reaction*, no book has explored that influence so wisely, insightfully, and honestly.

Had he not already been following the same path for several years, Bill Clinton might almost be thought to have been using the Edsalls' book as a kind of manual in his successful presidential race, a guide to how a Democratic candidate could defuse the race issue and win the presidency.

The question is whether Clinton managed only to defuse the issue—or whether he disarmed it. Despite indications that this year's presidential election signals a change in the alignments that have been created over the past quarter century by the race issue, the Edsalls' analysis remains current and largely valid.

So, unfortunately, does Andrew Hacker's in *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal* (Scribners, \$34.95, 258 pp.). His book, published last spring, which I reviewed in *Commonweal* [June 5], is an exquisitely insightful attempt to chart the social and economic divide between blacks and whites. And in too many respects that divide is deeper and wider than ever.

Hacker has a wonderful faculty for seeing in statistics things that others overlook. His interpretations are not always convincing, but they are invariably intriguing.

To an extent that leaves this black man somewhat uncomfortable, however, Hacker seems to suggest that bridging the racial gap and bringing blacks to full equality depend mostly on white understanding and good will.

To be sure, these are necessary. But if blacks must wait for whites to save them, then salvation, I fear, will never come.

Molly Finn

MOLLY FINN, a frequent Commonweal contributor, lives in New York City.

In the spirit of Christmas, I will refrain from naming most of the recently published books I read in 1992. Several much-praised novels and books of essays were sent me for review. So appallingly thin were the books, and so self-indulgent and self-important were the authors, that I was forced to turn for sustenance to something I knew would nourish me. Sliding shamelessly down the slippery slope of rereading, I basked in the works of Dickens, Henry James, Hawthorne, and James Joyce, to name only a few of the dead white European (and American) males who helped me through the year.

The fine and interesting films that have been made from E. M. Forster's novels took me back to the books themselves. My memory of the novels was dim and the

films so vivid I'd almost convinced myself that the movies were probably better than the books. I was wrong. As is usually the case, the novels are richer and more entertaining than the films and in addition they're thought-provoking. Forster lifts himself out of the action of the novels from time to time to offer the reader his sharp observations and philosophical comments on the human experience. In his little book *E. M. Forster*, Lionel Trilling singles out Forster's characteristic focus: "All novelists deal with morality, but not all novelists...are concerned with moral realism, which is not the awareness of morality itself but the contradiction, paradoxes, and dangers of living the moral life." *A Room with a View* (1908) and *Howard's End* (1910) are particularly delightful, but if you're anything like me, once you've started you'll read any book by Forster you can lay your hands on. Serious, witty, romantic, melodramatic, written in the best crisp, accurate, and unpretentious prose, these books have lasted beyond their day; they are a perfect antidote to up-to-date schlock.

Mariette in Ecstasy by Ron Hansen (Harper Perennial, \$10, 179 pp.) is an extraordinary short novel that seems suspended in time and space, even as we follow an order of nuns through their daily life, always aware of the time of day, the succession of feast days, the seasons, the landscape and the physical attributes of their surroundings, their clothing, their bodies. I don't know how accurate this intimate portrait is; it is certainly convincing. So is the story, full of ambiguities, of Mariette's short postulancy—her life in the convent, her life of prayer, her experience of Christ's stigmata, her trial, and her departure from the convent. The feeling of the book is French, like Bernanos or Mauriac. Rereading it is even better than reading it the first time.

But the book that convinced me that the nineties can produce something great is Mark Helprin's *A Soldier of the Great War* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, \$24.95, 792 pp.). Through a fantastic accident, Alessandro Giuliani, a seventy-four-year-old professor of aesthetics, finds himself walking through the Italian countryside with

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"The stone age is finished. It's just a bunch of rocks now."

Nicolo, an illiterate and very innocent factory worker to whom he relates the story of his life, focusing especially on its central event, the Great War, in which he served as a soldier in the Italian army. Nicolo and Alessandro's lively conversation frames the narrative. Nicolo reveals both his ignorance and an awakening consciousness; Alessandro tells him he is grateful that "your vitality bled into me and rattled awake the part of my soul that was going to sleep." Alessandro seeks to educate the boy. He talks about art, nature, sex. He teaches Nicolo to look at the moon: "The whole world stops as this stunning dancer rises," Alessandro said, "and its beauty puts to shame all our doubts.... Without saying anything, it says so much.... In that sense, it's better than the sun, which is always holding forth and butting at you like a ram." He tells Nicolo a secret he's never revealed to anyone. He speaks of his approaching death. And he speaks about the war which even at this age "I can't get out of my blood.... I dream of the war more than I dream of the present or of my youth. It is the essential condition to which I always return and refer. Should I slip, it is where I will fall; should I weaken, it is where I will rest."

As does everything in Helprin's work, the war takes place in a natural world of majestic beauty where "the light of stars collided and crossed," "mysterious and beguiling songbirds... rose from thickets and trees, and hovered like black sunlight," moonlight is "the color of pearl, with grays, silver, and gold all beaming from it in a flash." Breakers are "held high in the wind and... curled and revolved in contradictory fonts of air and rocking parabolas of foam." Alessandro lives in

constant communication with the beauty and power of nature. "[He] loved the stars for being unassailable, and believed that each and every one of them was his ally."

Helprin's nature is not neutral. It helps determine the emotional life of his characters. It provides context and contrast to events as overwhelming and vicious as war. It boldly continues blazing its beauty even as we destroy ourselves. Alessandro says "...the wonderful things of the world are nothing more than a frame for a spirit, like fire and light, that is the endless roiling of love and grace.... beauty cannot be expressed or explained in a theory or an idea,... it moves by its own law,... it is God's way of comforting his broken children."

Another contrast to the horrors of war is the richness of the family life and the culture in which Alessandro grew up, a life that fostered and celebrated the loving, intelligent, adventurous, accomplished young man Alessandro became before he was immersed in the war. Helprin's portrayal of the brutality and futility of war is made more poignant by the presence of this picture of civilized life, as it is by Alessandro's constant preoccupation with art. The descriptions of Raphael's portrait of Bindo Altoviti in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich and of Giorgione's *La Tempesta* in the Accademia in Venice not only make you want to rush off to see them. They confirm our recognition of art as something that connects human beings with eternity.

If these few little quotations haven't made you want to read this wonderful book, it's probably not for you. As for me, I can hardly wait to reread it.

Chet Raymo

CHET RAYMO, professor of physics at Stonehill College in Massachusetts, is a science columnist for the Boston Globe and author of several books on science. His second novel, *The Dork of Cork* (Warner), will be published in the spring.

Nature writing at its best springs the gap between the "two cultures." Respectful of scientific fact and sensitive to human meaning, nature writers, like jugglers, keep universals and particulars in the air at the same time. At the heart of the genre is the notion that any place contains all places, and any time contains all time.

Henry David Thoreau established the pattern for America. The waters of Walden Pond were deep enough to hold all of human history, and the view from the door of his cabin encompassed the distant stars. Within a square mile of land surrounding his pond, Thoreau discovered universal truths.

On a square mile of land not far from Walden Pond, John Hanson Mitchell achieves the same thing in a pair of books recently republished as a handsome set: *Ceremonial Time: Fifteen Thousand Years on One Square Mile* (Houghton Mifflin, \$10.95, 222 pp.). I am late discovering Mitchell's books. I read reviews when they were first published and recall thinking each time, "This sounds like a must-read." Somehow the books slipped by me until now. Just as well, because back-to-back they make a particularly pleasurable read.

Like the nineteenth-century naturalist John Burroughs, Mitchell is content to let the turning earth bring everything by his door. His subject is "that undiscovered country of the nearby, the secret world that lurks beyond the night windows and at the fringe of cultivated back yards." What he discovers there is astonishing: woolly mammoths, shamans, coyotes, scientists, witches, a weird assortment of colonial Americans, and at least one computer company CEO. What he learns is a lesson that must be relearned in every generation: "that the essence of civilization

is not the multiplication of wants but the elimination of need."

Roger Swain is another poet of the back yard. He is the well-known host of Public Television's "The Victory Garden" and science editor of *Horticulture* magazine. His latest book is *Saving Graces: Sojourns of a Back Yard Biologist* (Little, Brown, \$17.95, 138 pp.). Swain takes as his epigraph a line from Colette: "The more the wonders of the visible world become inaccessible, the more intensely do its curiosities affect us." His essays will appeal particularly to readers of a certain age, who remember such things as dime-store turtles, the odors of witch hazel and winter-green, and the dark luster of horse chestnuts collected in shoe boxes for...for what? Why did we collect them? I can't remember.

Somehow, these things have become inaccessible. We have surrounded ourselves with an impermeable membrane of asphalt, television images, and hurry. The tiny miracles that once seemed to occur unbidden in our back yards are no longer valued. In our *fin de siècle* affluence, we can afford Hollywood special effects and virtual realities. It is the rare person today who will bend to pick up a penny. Roger Swain is a writer who picks up nature's pennies and reminds us why they were once so important.

One person's back yard is another's wilderness. People have lived on the shores of the Gulf of California in Baja California for ten thousand years (at least); for that long, those shores have been someone's back yard. Nevertheless, when John Janovy arrives, he finds a wild, extraordinary, sun-struck Eden. Janovy is distinguished professor of biological sciences at the University of Nebraska, and author of the popular *Keith County Journal*. He comes to Baja as an emissary from a world of university scientists consumed by their search for solutions to problems of practical, thus economic, interest. *The Vermillion Sea* (Houghton Mifflin, \$19.95, 226 pp.) is the account of his journey. It is a record of childlike wonder, anticipation, and discovery.

Like Mitchell and Swain, Janovy brings the knowledge of a scientist and the sensitivity of a poet to the description of one charmed place. He writes of mollusks and whales, rocks and old Fords and Chevys,

gastropods, pelicans, and vermillion sunrises. What he gives us is "a sort of cosmology, an example of one way to see the universe." Among the flora and fauna Janovy describes, the human animal is central. His book shows us what life is (as only a biologist can), and makes us glad to be alive.

Helen Alvare

HELEN ALVARE is director of planning and information for the Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Living in Washington is having its effect on me. If before attending a party I learn that talk of religion and politics will be verboten, I wonder how I am supposed to have any fun. For the most part my reading tastes reflect my boorish conversational habits.

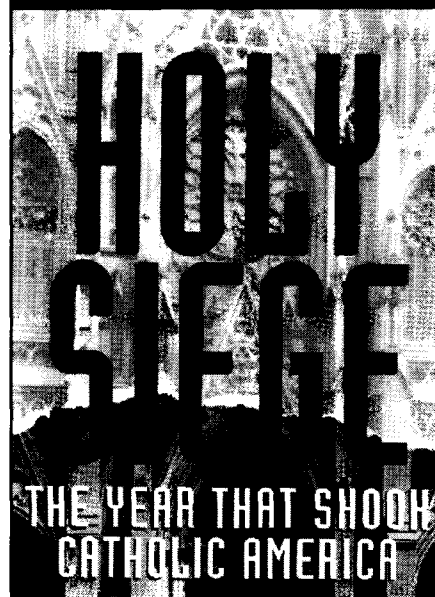
First, let me recommend *Why Americans Hate Politics* (Simon & Schuster, \$12,444 pp.), by E.J. Dionne, Jr. Most people who read this book will feel sure they thought of its thesis first, so intuitive are Dionne's ideas. His argument is that Americans are trapped in a "politics of false choices." Whether the subject is race, abortion, or the family, Dionne lucidly articulates why we are so dissatisfied with current political offerings. Many will begin the book, as I did, believing that their political opinions make them a party of one; they will finish understanding that there exist in America communities of opinion which transcend party identification.

On the subject of politics not as usual, I would recommend Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *The General in His Labyrinth* (translated by Edith Grossman, Penguin, \$12, 285 pp.). Whether one is interested in Latin American history, General Simon Bolivar himself, or just the magical, lyrical writing of Marquez, this book is a treat.

It was on a recent trip to the dry-cleaner—part of an endless round of dropping off and picking up the clothes I love to buy and wear—that I got my most recent craving to toss it all and live the simple life! We all know the life I mean. It's more in

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touch with the seasons, filled with dinners other than "Budget Gourmets," and it includes time to make your bed in the morning. I have read a number of books of this genre, like *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* or *Do What You Love, the Money Will Follow*. But *Simple Living* (Viking, \$21, 272 pp.) by Frank Levering and Wanda Urbanska is one of the best. Not only is it especially literate, but it realistically treats the difficulties of living with less after years of pursuing an expensive lifestyle.

Pro-Life Feminism (edited by Gail Grenier Sweet, Life Cycle Books, \$9.95, 234 pp.) is a collection of essays that has been around for seven years but is, I believe, just coming into its own. Feminists maintaining a prolife stance have long been banned from the major women's groups, and only recently are becoming a distinctive voice in the prolife movement and on the national scene. They could not be more welcome at a time when it seems there is little new under the sun that can be said about our nation's abortion problem. It is also encouraging that the prolife feminist message holds so much in common with the seamless garment approach to social justice.

It is no secret that our country tends still to rate mothering somewhere below achieving a lucrative career and somewhere above unemployment. As someone daily growing in appreciation for the value of good mothering, I was immediately attracted to the thesis pursued in Sally Cunneen's *Mother Church* (Paulist Press, \$11.95, 222 pp.)—that our church as mother can learn valuable lessons from women's mothering experiences. Cunneen treats both women and the church with respect and love.

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Paul Elie

PAUL ELIE, a frequent *Commonweal* contributor, also writes for the *New Republic* and *Lingua Franca*.

I've thought often this year about Jonathan Franzen's second novel, *Strong Motion* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$22.95, 508 pp.), as though my attention might compensate for general public neglect. Like his first book, *The Twenty-seventh City* (1988), it is what Saul Bellow has called a "large-audience novel"—an artful, thoughtful, social, capacious book that bridges the gap between a popular thriller and a literary masterwork. Except that *Strong Motion* hasn't found a large audience. This is lamentable, because the novel is as engrossing and accomplished, and as public in its concerns, as any I have read lately. Its complicated plot hangs on the romance between a postcollegiate young man named Louis Holland and Renee Seitchek, a Harvard seismologist who has a conspiracy theory that attributes seismic tremors in greater Boston to illegal chemical dumping. Meanwhile the Rev. Philip Stites, a vociferous opponent of abortion, targets Renee for protest after her decision to have an abortion inadvertently makes the evening news. As Louis and Renee try to prove her theory, Franzen makes connections—elaborate, but never laborious—between seismic "strong motion" and strong emotions, between the earth's inward changing and Renee's. In an imperfect analogy, he likens corporate abuse of the environment to public meddling with a woman's reproductive system. But Franzen's rangy intellect is held in check by his artistry—his unerring plotting, his eye for end-of-the-century manners, his inviting prose—and Stites's rousing stump speech against abortion is one that should prompt readers on all sides of the issue to a renewed examination of their views.

Franzen has cited the influence of first novels such as *Wise Blood* and *Midnight's Children*, whose authors "seemed to have learned not to sound like kids anymore." If the stories that open and close *Let the*

Dead Bury Their Dead (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, \$19.95, 334 pp.) are any indication, Randall Kenan, too, is a writer gifted with early maturity. The author of the novel, *A Visitation of Spirits* (1989), Kenan has been called "our 'black' Marquez," and he clearly has learned from Marquez's magic realism. In "Clarence and the Dead," he presents a talking pig and a boy who, his mother having died giving birth to him, grows up able to speak to the dead (they mainly gossip). In the title story, Kenan surrounds a mock oral history with a comically pedantic commentary. Typically, writers under the sway of Marquez steal his magic, overlooking his realism—but Kenan roots his every sentence in the works and days of the North Carolina town of Tims Creek, creating the effect of a "dream [that] had the taste and feel of real life." Rather than grafting on magic, he finds it by burrowing deep within the ordinary. "Now a ole John Deere tractor," he writes, in just one exemplary passage, "if you play the clutch and the gas and the brake just right, will rear up its front part just like a horse. Boys round Tims Creek use to do it all the time to impress folk, pretending they were in the wild wild West. It's not too likely it'll rear up like that with a cultivator attached to the back; but it happens."

Someone once said of Flannery O'Connor that any crank could write a letter to her and get an answer. I recalled that remark earlier this year as I read Anthony Burgess's two volumes of memoirs, where he recounts a life in which he seems to have been willing to take up almost any project proposed to him—reviews, scripts, teaching, orchestral scores, hack travel writing, the odd polemical joust with the Vatican—while writing his many novels. Grove Weidenfeld published *Little Wilson, Big God* (\$14.95) in 1987 and *You've Had Your Time* (\$23.50) in 1991, and given their bulk (460 pp. and 406 pp.) one might have expected to spend from then till now getting through them: but they are brisk and wholly charming. After seventy-five years and some fifty books, Burgess shows no loss of vitality; like Pagnol's films or New England songwriter Bill Morrissey's records, these memoirs leave an indelible impression of the artist who has fashioned them. Among a thousand

other subjects, Burgess tells, in his wryly self-justifying manner, of writing a profile of Graham Greene in 1980: "Later, [Greene] contributed to 'Sayings of the Week' in the *Observer* the following remark: 'Burgess put words in my mouth which I had to look up in the dictionary.' This turned me against him. He had long, it seemed, had something against me: back in 1966 I had written an article on him in which I suggested that he had been touched by the Jansenist heresy. In 1980 he had abandoned hell and sin and was on the way to dispensing with God, but the imputation of Jansenism still rankled. He was like a murderer annoyed at being called a shoplifter."

Burgess's books make clear that a career of miscellaneous journalism, for all its drawbacks, is not to be despised. This emerges as well in Salman Rushdie's essay collection *Imaginary Homelands* (Penguin, \$12.50, 439 pp.). When the book was first published, most reviewers focused on post-fatwa essays such as "Why I Have Embraced Islam" (replaced here by "One Thousand Days in a Balloon," which Rushdie delivered during his surprise appearance at Columbia University a year ago). I have been drawn, instead, to Rushdie's book reviews, most of them short pieces that he wrote before perilous celebrity overtook him. They serve as a reminder that once upon a time he was just another middling British writer, holding forth on this and that with more intelligence and enthusiasm than was required of him.

In these essays Rushdie can be seen gradually developing his own aesthetic, while never losing sight of the books under review. Borrowing categories from Italo Calvino, for example, he writes that the episodes in Julian Barnes's *History of the Word in 10 1/2 Chapters* (among them "a woodworm's-eye view of the Ark story") "possess in abundance the high literary virtue of lightness, [but] they fail to acquire, by cumulation, the necessary weight: it being the paradox of literature that you need the pair of them on the voyage, weight and lightness, and, as with lovers and animals, you can't afford to leave half the couple off your ark."

At first glance Jon Savage's *England's Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk*

Rock, and Beyond (St. Martin's, \$16.95, 602 pp.) seems to be all weight and no lightness, another overlong pop-music study that, in presenting songs as texts and fashion as a subversive activity, leaves itself devoid of any writerly style or music. Savage generally holds in check the pretensions implied by the book's subtitle, however, adroitly walking the line between amateur semiotics and pop-music hagiography. A British journalist, he sees the late-'70s rise of scruffy, enraged bands such as the Sex Pistols, the Clash, and Generation X as a serious affair, equal parts class rebellion and postmodern media put-on; thus he misses the exquisitely vague, low, mixed motives of punk in America. He also sees punk culture and music (such as the Sex Pistols' harshly ironic single "God Save the Queen," released during Elizabeth's jubilee celebration) as the culmination of 1968-style radical politics, when in retrospect punk seems not so much an end as a beginning: pop culture's first definitive break with the '60s promises of unlimited plenitude and progress. Even so, Savage has writ-

ten a good book when he could very easily—and very punkishly—have written a bad one.

Dennis Doyle

DENNIS DOYLE teaches in the religious studies department at the University of Dayton. His *The Church Emerging from Vatican II: A Popular Approach to Contemporary Catholicism* is published by Twenty-Third Publications.

I tend to be suspicious of the trendy, perhaps overly so. Thus I realized with some personal surprise that the books that most touched me over the past year were all, well, not exactly trendy, but what I might call "prophetic."

In *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (Crossroad, \$24.95, 316 pp.), Elizabeth Johnson has produced a scholarly work on a crucial topic written so well as to make it ac-

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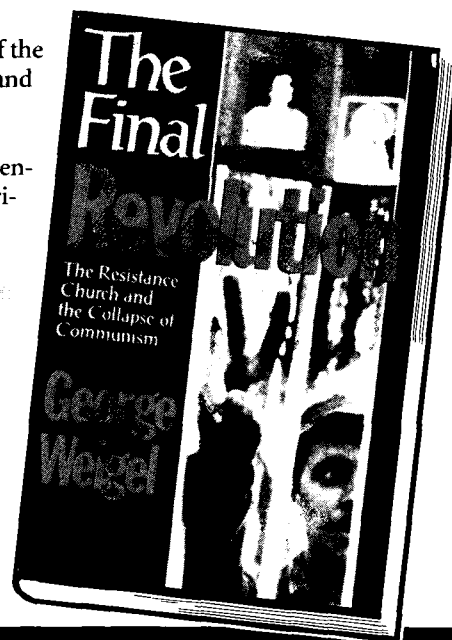
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cessible to a popular audience. She provides theological grounding for speaking of God in exclusively feminine metaphors, at least for a temporary transitional period until talk of God can be truly coequal. Although she speaks from deeply within the context of a movement, she qualifies her positions carefully enough to transcend her ideology and to offer a discussion of God that should be enlightening and inspiring for all readers no matter what their prior persuasions. Johnson's mastery of and feel for the classical sources is impressive. Her organization is ingenious, moving always from "below," often erupting in brilliant flourishes of penetrating insight and touching expression. It would have been enough for Johnson to deepen my growing appreciation of feminist perspectives; she has gone further and deepened my apprehension of the mystery of who God is, and for that I am grateful.

My vision of the evolving cosmos has been adjusted and considerably enlarged by *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era—A Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos* (Harper, \$22, 255 pp.), by Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry. This work is so close to the cutting edge that I recommend you wear gloves when turning the pages. It represents an attempt by leading figures within the ecological movement to re-envision the story of the cosmos and human history in a fully integrated fashion. Everything from the Big Bang to the formation of galaxies, suns, planets, earth, life forms, animals, and various stages of human development is narrated from the same mythic-scientific point of view. For those who find Carl Sagan and Stephen Hawking to be spiritually truncated and yet seek a more updated version of science than that offered by Teilhard de Chardin, Swimme and Berry are worth a try. I am not without reservations about what at times seems to be simply their personifying of natural forces, about their squeezing out extensive mythical mileage from disputed theories, and about their almost glib attitude concerning how easy it will be to reintegrate the religious traditions of the world within their story of the cosmos. I did, though, sincerely feel challenged by their "change or die" ecological millenarianism (or should I say

"billenarianism"?). Also, they do have some success in mounting a challenge to the current division of the natural sciences, the human sciences, and the humanities by using the same metaphor of emerging creativity to drive their explanations throughout. In the process they raised for me a thousand stimulating questions.

A more down-to-earth book that has changed the way I think is *Whispers of Revelation: Discovering the Spirit of the Poor* (Twenty-Third Publications, \$9.95, 209 pp.) by Bill and Patty Coleman. This brave couple in their fifties uprooted themselves from Connecticut and moved to



Cuernavaca, Mexico, to do what their subtitle suggests. The book tells the story of their first two years, describing their observing, helping, and finally just being with the people. In the process, various layers of attitudes and presuppositions are stripped away. Their quest leads them to a new appreciation not only of Scripture but of popular religiosity and traditional liturgical spirituality. They discover anew, through the eyes of the poor, the meaning of Christmas and Easter. Their greatest gift is the depth of their love for the people whom they encounter. This is a touching, sometimes gut-wrenching book that takes the reader inside the base ecclesial communities at the root of liberation theology.

Two of my favorite books came out last year and are already in paperback. Anne

Tyler's *Saint Maybe* (Ivy Books, \$5.99, 337 pp.), is a best seller that stands in supermarket racks amid the tabloids like a nugget of gold in a trash heap. Her can't-put-it-down story of human repentance and divine grace that intermingle with and yet transcend the conventionally religious should not be missed. I recommend also Walker Percy's *Signposts in a Strange Land* (Noonday, \$15, 428 pp.), a posthumous collection of essays that explore literature, science, philosophy, and religion in a search to uncover the root sickness of the modern era. Percy, a distinguished novelist, diagnoses the modern malaise as a lack of appreciation of the transcendent. With his somewhat cranky conservatism, he restores my healthy suspicions of the overly trendy. Yet Percy is himself something of a prophet, as well as one of the most important American Catholic intellectuals of the twentieth century.

Jessica Bayne

JESSICA BAYNE is a senior at Columbia University and an intern at Commonweal.

I give books to my family and to my friends for Christmas, books that I search for in the same way my grandmother searches for pieces for her quilts. Personal transitions have marked the past few years, and I have found that my Christmas books seem to mark both global and personal transformations. These are books that have drawn me in and that have nourished and comforted me. I read them while I cooked dinner, turning the pages while I stirred spaghetti, steam collecting on my glasses. Or I read them on the subway—some are spotted by spilled coffee. Now they are well worn and sit on my night table, and I hope they will be cherished on the bookshelves of my friends.

Mario Vargas Llosa says it best in his novel *The Storyteller* (Penguin, \$9, 246 pp.). Books are "tangible proof that storytelling can be something more than entertainment....Something primordial, something the very existence of a people may depend on." Vargas Llosa's novel, a montage of myth and recollection, is a

good example of this kind of storytelling. In *The Storyteller* a Peruvian novelist remembers his friend, Saúl Zuratas, who has disappeared into the Amazon rain forest. Saúl has become a "habladore," a storyteller, for the indigenous people. As a storyteller or mythmaker, he articulates and therefore helps maintain and perpetuate the native culture. Vargas Llosa blends folk tale with herbalism, Kafka with the Gospel of St. John, in a style known as "magical realism." He creates a new world, one that has more reality and sense to it than the author's own Peru, where he ran unsuccessfully for president just a few years ago.

Like Vargas Llosa, the Yugoslavian (now Serbian) poet and novelist Milorad Pavic may be considered a magical realist. In *Landscape Painted with Tea* (Vintage, \$12, 342 pp.), he merges puns, proverbs, allegory, and history. This is unlike any other novel I have ever read. It confronts the reader, asks her to complete crosswords and even to fill in the denouement of the story. The narrative concerns a Serbian architect who searches for his father who was lost on Mount Athos during World War II. Atnas Svilar's journeys take him from the mountain's famous monastery to Marshal Tito's summer home, La Scala, to his business in California. The novel is panoramic, its story winding through generations of characters both real and allegorical. All are rendered in sharp, teasing prose. Along the way people lose their voices, women grow mustaches, and a seven-year-old impersonates Satan.

If the reader is forced to become part of Pavic's novel, he will be content to eavesdrop on Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (Plume, \$9, 290 pp.). This novel describes a generation of the García family who settle in New York after fleeing the Dominican Republic. In the different voices of the García women, the novel examines tradition and the painful repercussions of leaving home. Alvarez describes the struggles of four daughters and their mother in their attempts to rediscover their values as they are haunted by memories of the country and family they've left behind. Accents may be lost as the women make their way in America, but the rhythms of childhood

and Dominican life still cling to the hearts of these women.

Natalia Ginzburg's collection of essays *The Little Virtues* (Little, Brown, \$7.95, 110 pp.) concludes my list. Ginzburg died this past year and this volume is an apt memorial, for you sense she wrote it for her children and for those of us who share her story. Ginzburg spent much of the Second World War in forced residence in a small town that is immortalized in her essay "Winter in the Abruzzi." Her husband, also a writer, was killed at the end of the war and this tragedy permeates these essays and gives Ginzburg's writing an aura of wisdom. My favorite essay is titled "My Vocation." In it she writes of her particular calling, writing, but her words are broad-reaching. "It is a vocation which...feeds on terrible things, it swallows the best and worst in our lives and our evil feelings flow in its blood just as much as our benevolent feelings. It feeds itself and it grows within us."

All these writers have crossed the lines of nationality and tradition. They reaffirm what it means to be a storyteller.

Frederick Franck

FREDERICK FRANCK has written extensively on Buddhism. Among his more recent books are *The Zen of Seeing/Drawing as Meditation* (Vintage) and *To Be Human against All Odds* (Asian Humanities Press). His *My Days with Albert Schweitzer* will be published in 1993 by Lyons & Burford.

My choices may show that Descartes Inc. is in serious trouble. The Rev. Thomas Berry's splendid paper *The Ecozoic Era* (The Riverdale Center of Religious Research, \$5) describes the earth, far from being a Cartesian machine, as a radically interdependent living system, vulnerable to irreversible damage and of which we humans are derivative parts. The fate of the earth therefore is our own. Berry's views are in close harmony with those of Gregory Bateson's (1904-

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1980) in *A Sacred Unity: Further Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (edited by Rodney E. Donaldson, HarperSan Francisco, \$24.95, 368 pp.). Bateson, a biologist celebrated for his anthropological field work with Margaret Mead, became a key figure in cybernetics and systems theory. *His Steps to the Ecology of Mind* (1972) made him the *maître à penser* for an entire generation. Answering the question: Does the brain think? Bateson answered, "No. What thinks is a brain in a human being who is part of a system that includes an environment." Bateson's epistemology, as antipodal to Descartes's as is Berry's, is a powerful stimulant in his stress on the "Sacred Unity"—in diversity—of the biosphere.

I found Masao Abe's *A Study of Dōgen, His Philosophy and Religion* (S.U.N.Y., \$12.95, 251 pp.) equally thought-provoking. Dōgen, the thirteenth-century founder of Soto Zen, is now regarded as the most powerful and original figure in Japanese religious thought. He rethought and recast all traditional Buddhist fundamentals. Professor Abe, who is prominent in Christian-Buddhist dialogue, has taught at Princeton, Claremont, and Purdue universities.

My next choice, *Inner Peace, World Peace, Essays on Buddhism and Non-Violence*, edited by Kenneth Kraft (S.U.N.Y., \$12.95, 156 pp.), is an anthology of essays on nonviolence, equally relevant to Christians and Buddhists. The final essay, by the Thai activist Sulek Sivaraksa, a man of exceptional courage and integrity, confirms and supplements Berry's Christic ethic for human survival. Sivaraksa also shows that it is not religion's impact on culture but cultural and political distortions of religious teaching that throughout history have provoked hatred, persecutions, and massacres.

Arno Gruen's *The Insanity of Normality* (Grove Weidenfeld, \$19.95, 226 pp.) is indispensable for understanding the self-hatred and the false selves children are forced to develop by suppressing their authenticity and autonomy in order to conform with their peers and to bribe authoritarian figures, such as parents and teachers, into accepting, "loving" them. With "ethnic cleansing" and a worldwide epidemic of archaic xenophobia and sadistic vio-

lence, one cannot afford to ignore this incisive analysis.

Sally Cunneen's *Mother Church* (Paulist Press, \$11.95, 222 pp.), another must, impresses by an intelligence *du coeur* free from all feminist chauvinism, yet far from the "silent woman idealized in the church." Her deep love for Pope John XXIII, "for whom the church existed not to serve itself, but the Spirit," colors her view of other popes in her lifetime who "continued to envision women's total lives in terms of the alternatives of motherhood and virginity, unaware of male bias, oblivious to psychological and spiritual stifling imposed on women's human development." She ends her rich, wise, and gentle observations on the church with a wonderfully poetic vision of Old Mother Church meditating on her children's "interpreting the religious story anew...to preserve life." Sally Cunneen succeeds in speaking from heart to heart.

Structures of Consciousness by Georg Feuerstein (Integral Publishing, \$14.95) is a provocative, brilliantly written introduction to the world of Jean Gebser, who is still relatively unknown in this country. Gebser (1905-1973) distinguished four stages or what he called structures of consciousness, from the "Archaic" via the "Magical" and "Mythic" to the mental structure which in the West flowered during the Renaissance, culminating in that *cogito* that gradually hypertrophied into the inflated ego's megalomania and science's claims to omniscience and omnipotence. In the early thirties Gebser perceived the first stirrings of a new mode of consciousness that, without decreasing or ignoring preceding stages, integrates these into an "Integral Structure of Consciousness." Thinkers such as Teilhard de Chardin, Bateson, Berry, Bohm, Sheldrake, and Barbara McClintock represent the avant garde of this consciousness.

The latter is the subject of Sr. Adrian M. Hofstetter, O.P.'s, admirable *New Biology: Barbara McClintock and an Emerging Holistic Science* (Anima Publishers, \$4.75, 18 pp.) In its few densely written pages she honors Nobel Laureate McClintock, who died recently in her nineties, as the remarkable scientist who for decades was the lone

pioneer of a new biology. She was not the conventional detached observer: "When I look at a cell, I get down into that cell and look around," she said. Bateson would have applauded. □

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

Swidler lacks facts

Twin Falls, Idaho
To the Editors: For the past ten years—at least—I have been correcting published accounts of the "Seattle case." Few writers have sufficient facts to present Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen's positions accurately.

Leonard Swidler [Correspondence, October 23] obviously does not have them. He refers to the "Vatican attacks on Küng, Schillebeeckx, *et al.*," and soon thereafter on Hunthausen, Boff, Gutierrez, Curran *et ad infinitum*."

My questions are: What in any of the correspondence that Mr. Swidler is familiar with constitutes a "Vatican attack" on the archbishop, what theological position places the archbishop in the same category as the other men mentioned, and does Mr. Swidler seriously believe that the list of people the Vatican has allegedly attacked goes on *ad infinitum*?

I have known the archbishop for years. I have lived, worked, and recreated with him. I believe that perpetuating such inaccuracies is a disservice to him.

[MOST REV.] NICOLAS E. WALSH

The writer is bishop emeritus of Yakima, Washington.

The writer replies:

If for the past ten years Archbishop Hunthausen thought that his situation vis à vis the Vatican was being presented inaccurately, it would seem that he himself would have issued any needed corrections. Bishop Walsh appears to be defending the Vatican rather than the archbishop. He does not identify any inaccuracies in my October 23 letter nor does he supply any corrections. Methinks he doth protest too much.

The Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church is concerned about the rights and responsibilities of *all* persons in the church, including the pope, bishops, clergy, and laity. It appeared to us in ARCC (and to millions of other committed Catholics) that Archbishop Hunt-hausen was not being treated justly by the Vatican when it visited upon him an unwanted coadjutor bishop, thereby severely limiting his episcopal rights and responsibilities. The basis for the Vatican's action against the archbishop was not an alleged doctrinal deviation, as with Küng, Schillebeeckx, *et al*, but alleged deviations in action. ARCC's concern rose out of our conviction that in all these cases the rights of these persons were violated because of an absence of due process. ARCC would be glad to be convinced, in dialogue and through evidence, that this conviction is not accurate.

LEONARD SWIDLER

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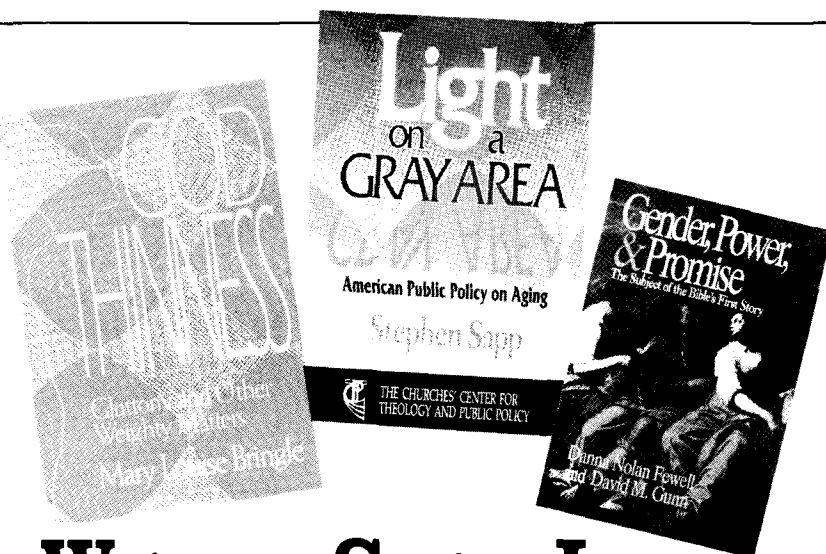
Fr. Ernest W. Ranly, a priest of the Society of the Precious Blood in Peru, and a frequent *Commonweal* contributor, will be available for lectures in the United States during January-February, 1993. Topics include "A Christian Spirituality of Nonviolence" and "An Inside Report on Peru, the Church, and 'Shining Path.'" To schedule

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labor movement, the Democratic party, the peace movement, and other once vital, inelegant places. Comments from some publishers and agents have been generally favorable, even enthusiastic, but they lament that it is not a category novel and point to drastically diminished fiction lists. Is there an agent or editor out there who wants to look at the manuscript? If interested please contact me promptly. Senility, death, madness, or perhaps only old rockin' chair might claim me soon. Telephone (718) 748-4130 or write *Commonweal*, Box A, 15 Dutch St., NY, NY 10038.



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